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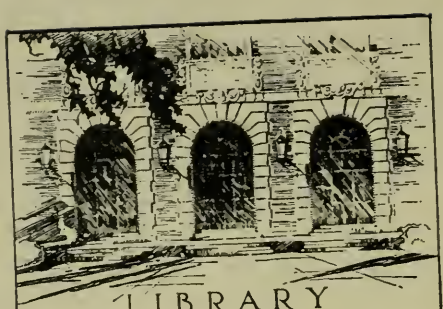

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THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHORESS OF THE

DIARY OF A DÉSENNUYÉE.

Catherine Grace Frances (Moody) Gore

" O matter and impertinency mix'd !"

SHAKSPEARE.

THREE VOLUMES.

VOL III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

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1838.

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THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Well!—some there be
Enjoy the fortune to have wondrous men
(Like brave beasts to their arms) support their state.
CHAPMAN'S GENTLEMAN USHER. 1606.

LORD MONTHERMER, who though a clever man in his way was clearly no conjurer, had accepted Harford's invitation as a guest to his uncle's Sunday dinner, without suspicion that there was a chance of his being accepted in the

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interim as a lover, by Lady Adelaide de Vere. Not yet, indeed, as an affianced husband,—or he would have found it impossible to subscribe to her ladyship's hard conditions, that the engagement must be fulfilled. It was the principle of the Colebrooke family, that there should be honour among diners-out.

His visit to Arlington Street, on the day succeeding the drawing-room, had been unpropitious. The rooms were crowded with visitors to Lord Colebrooke's gouty stool. To return on the Saturday was an effort which baffled the moral courage of poor Monthermer; and his explanations with Lady Adelaide had accordingly taken place that night at the opera, between the door of the Duchess of Havering's box and the door of the Duchess of Havering's carriage, in a crowd equally unpropitious to making love or making way.

Nor had Lord Carpynter's dinner-party

formed an advantageous prelude to his efforts of eloquence. On arriving at the opera, Monthermer's understanding was pretty nearly overpowered, *not* by Claret and Champagne, but by the weight of politics with which it had been overlaid,—heavy as the pigs of lead deposited on a strong man, to make proof of his powers of endurance. On entering Lady Adelaide's and Mademoiselle Elsler's presence for the ballet, his brain was in a confusion worse confounded of conservatism, liberalism, and you-get-out-I-get-in-ism,—the only definite sect of modern politicians. One of his noble ears was ringing with poor-laws for Ireland,—the other stuffed with rating for the church; and it was in the midst of these contending arguments, he undertook to meke it apparent to the loveliest woman in all England, that he was in all England the man most crossed in love. By the time her ladyship's hand was placed on the

footman's arm, Monthermer had hazarded a declaration of eternal attachment.

It was of course impossible for the lady to hazard a reply likely to be overheard by the duchess-aunt, and certain to be overheard by the link-boy. But it appeared to Lord Monthermer that the hand he ventured to press at parting, was not *very* hastily withdrawn; and on the morrow, accordingly, no sooner had the churches of the west end poured forth their silk and satin congregations (who after giving ear to the good things expounded by the preacher, fulfil the denunciation of the psalmist by going empty away), than he returned to Arlington Street; and on finding that Lady Adelaide was not yet returned from the Chapel Royal, proceeded to saunter in the Green Park till her return.

Unhappy man!—*He* noted not at such a crisis, its breath of cows,—so inappropriate to the

courtly soil;—*he* quarrelled not with its muddy pond immortalized by the Spectator as the wretched refuge of starved poets and despairing lovers. *He* noted not the bright aspect of the place, with its Sunday vesture of happy human beings; the sabbath faces of the poor who labour,—of the rich who are released from duns. *He* observed not the city clerk, twirling his stick, an all-but cudgel, and finding it lighter than a pen; nor the happy father, hugging on one ragged arm a heavy boy and dragging with the other hand a tottering girl, and finding both together lighter than a feather. He saw not the bricklayer, with his chin new-mown,—the washerwoman with her sodden fingers, stiffened by their weekly rest;—he saw nothing in creation but himself, and the other object of his idolatry.

At three o'clock, Monthermer started once

more for the post.—Distanced!—Lady Adelaide had returned;—and finding Lord Colebrooke departed on his airing,—left home again with the duchess.

"Where are they gone?" cried he, with some indignation, to the supercilious butler.

"Can't say, my lord."

"To the Zoological?"

"I should imagine not."

"To the park?"

"*Certainly* not."

"You have no idea which way the duchess will drive?"—

"Her grace often visits Lady Glenvillian on Sundays, my lord, at her villa at Campden Hill."

Lord Monthermer's plans for the day were thus discomfited; and even when, after swallowing a prodigious quantity of dust and a few

oaths, he contrived to overtake the duchess's carriage, for a moment at Kensington toll-bar, all he received for his pains was Lady Adelaide's assurance that he *must* dine in the city; that their interview would at all events be deferred till the morrow, as in spite of her father's gout, Lord Colebrooke and herself were engaged to a state-dinner at the Duke of Havering's to meet a member of the royal family.

Nevertheless she *did* specify the morrow:—she *did* say with a smile that sank into his heart like balm to all its bruises,—"I will see you at three to-morrow!"—and with such an incentive to hope, his spirits rose, and he prepared himself in no ordinary mood of elasticity, to dine with Sir Jacob Harford in Mincing Lane.

The stony miles intervening between Grosvenor Square and the heart of the city, flew

like lightning beneath the hoofs of Lord Bridgnorth's matchless horses; and the moments employed in the journey sped with equal rapidity to the bewildered soul of poor Lord Monthermer.—There were neither drays nor trucks to impede his progress over the ground on working-days so obstructed (the labours of Newgate, Leadenhall Market, and other points of popular attraction, being the business of Black Monday); and he met with no annoyance save from the contact of a harum-scarum tandem, whose springs and cattle remained to be broken, which was driven against his carriage by an impertinent puppy in a white neckcloth, aborigenous of Finsbury Square.

To the city palace of the great Sir Jacob Harford, he was welcomed by his whippersnapper friend, the *attaché*.

He found half-a-dozen strangers assembled round the chair of a shrivelled old man, whose

personal dimensions were as diminutive as the proportions of his dwelling-house were capacious; and Lord Monthermer was promoted, on his presentation to a seat adjoining that of Sir Jacob, commanding the ear of the asthmatic old man whose pen-hand still commanded the fate of millions.

"Glad to see you here sir"—said he to his lordly guest. For the superannuated banker had outlived all heed of forms. He knew that life was at its term,—that his grand liability would shortly fall due,—and seemed in haste to get through the business of life, that the balance-sheet might be ready).—"My nevy Dick told me he had invited a new lord something or other—Don't care much for lords—seldom come into the city sir except for what they can get—Easter dinner, or a loan on personal security—but when he told me his acquaintance with you commenced at Naples as Sir William

Helmsley my heart warmed to the name—your late father sir was my early friend and first constituent—you'll find my name as co-trustee to his marriage settlement with Lady Caroline Delaval—Heartily glad to see you" resumed the old man, suddenly stretching his withered hand towards Lord Monthermer,—who, early an orphan and reared under the tutelage of the Earl of Shropshire, was in truth little versed in the acquaintanceships of his parents.

Sir Jacob, about to pursue his civilities to the son of his former friend, was now interrupted by the necessity of doing the honours of his house to a new-comer,—a grandee of Spain, covered with crosses till his well-padded chest resembled a schoolboy's game of fox and goose. The three punctilious bows of ceremony exacted by foreign royalty, gave evidence of the deference due from the

Marquis di Senateja to the shrivelled mummy of a man, with whom he was anxiously negociating a national loan!

Lord Monthermer profited by the interval to survey the abode of his new friend.—The drawing-rooms, though lofty and solidly furnished, were indebted for their chief adornment to two masterly portraits, by Lawrence; one, of the Duke of Wellington, a full-length equestrian piece,—the other, of the great political leader to the influence of whose principles the banker felt himself in a great measure indebted for his commercial prosperity.—In addition to these, stood at the extremity of either room, a pedestal,—the one bearing the name of Nollekens, the other Roubilliac;—the one an exquisite Venus, the other a descending Mercury. But, if the two portraits formed indications of the moral faith of the old banker, these costly works of art were admitted to his

presence only as a safe investment; Sir Jacob having purchased them at an early epoch of his public life, with the same views that determined him to exhibit on his table a massive service of plate,—namely, that the world might perceive he was realizing.—The banker's extravagance was pure matter of thrift!—

Among the company who were now successively announced, by two venerable servants dignified as seneschals and sleek as abbots, were Lord Monthermer's friend, Mr. Strangways; a Prussian Hofgerath, who was perambulating Europe for the effusion and absorption of universal knowledge; Lord Portumna, as gracious as a prince; Lord Monthermer, as happy as a king; the aforesaid Spanish Marquis of Senateja as man of figure, with an accompanying secretary as man of figures or walking numeration-table appendixed to the hidalgo, to reduce his vast vauntings into sober arith-

metic. In addition to these magnificos, there were two wealthy merchants from Devonshire Square, a Jew and a Gentile;—a plainly-dressed, plain, middle-aged man, plainly the head-clerk of Harford and Co.; and a nondescript, slim, young gentleman, whom Monthermer could not exactly make out, till young Harford announced him in a whisper to be Sapphic, the author. "I knew you'd find it a deuced bore, here," said the youth, "so I secured some fun for you. I've got an author!—Flaszaski put me up to it, and I've got an author!"—And the exulting tone of the attaché was exactly that of a schoolboy exclaiming to his fellow-corduroys,—"Hurrah! fetch the terrier, and let's have a hunt!—I've got a rat!"

Dinner was announced;—choice and sterling as if ordered by the Original. The turtle was worthy of Sir William Curtis,—the venison, of the turtle;—and there were kickshaws for those

who liked them, undesignated indeed by the titles of *modern* kickshaws, but appearing under the quaint nomenclature of Mrs. Glasse. The slim author had before him a calf's head surprised; the Neapolitan ambassador, a Florentine; the stationary head-clerk, oyster-loaves; and the Jew merchant, a miraculous draught of fishes, yclept white bait. The wine was such as Portumna, accustomed to *trinquer* with the sovereigns of a whole congress, admitted superior to all his past experience; and the Spanish grandee (whom the waggish author converted into the Mar*quiz* of Sennatea), protested that the Val-de-Penas must have been subtracted from his own peninsular cellar.

Sir Jacob who was drinking barley-water and dining on friar's chicken, compelled to give the honours of his table to Portumna and the "Marquiz," and keep up his conversation with them in French, excited the surprise of Lord

Monthermer by his Parisian pronunciation and fluency. But the old banker's coarse English came by nature,—his idiomatic French, by art; —as much a portion of his stock in business as his plate and his Roubilliac. Scarcely less startling was the universality of his political knowledge and the variety of his sources of information; and before the close of dinner, the country baronet, who had been apt to fancy aforetime that money-makers were people capable of making nothing else *but* money, began to veer towards an opinion that they made money from their previous knowledge of all other species of earthly manufacture,—from the making of popes and ministers of state, to that of national bonds created by the release of a nation from bondage;—steam-vessels and railroads,—mortgages and post-obits,—and all the many-sided machinery of spendthrift-hood!—Sir Jacob surprised him more by his

latent acuteness, than in the first instance by his apparent decrepitude.

Strangways, who, like other untravelled Englishmen, was as profound a dunce in the living languages as he was a profound scholar in the dead, lagged occasionally into the conversation in exceedingly English French; in hopes to cement a diplomatic alliance with his Spanish neighbour; while Senateja, recognising him as a guest of the Haverings, immediately referred to their common friend, the Foreign Affairs,—rendering him his ample due as a man of strong abilities and the highest honour.

"*La Duchesse aussi, est une très sensible femme!*" observed the secretary, intending to convey a proper compliment to her grace's understanding.

"*Ah?—Madame la Duchesse est très sensible?—Ce pauvre duc!*" exclaimed the marquis,

shrugging his shoulders. "*Du reste, une femme fort aimable.*"

Strangways, not quite satisfied of the amiableness (according to the English signification) of a woman whose nights were spent in whist and whose days in nothing, digressed from her grace's moral to her physical endowments, by loud praises of her "*grands yeux obscurs,*" till the civil foreigner was obliged to coincide vaguely with—"*Mais oui—une fort jolie figure!*"

"A pretty figure?" *mentally ejaculated* poor Strangways. "Why, the man must be blind!—Pretty figure?—Why, the poor dear duchess's waist is as thick as his own understanding!"—

While these misapprehensions reduced their mutual appreciation of each other's talents to the lowest level, their war of dulness was scarcely more absurd than the war of wit

which was going on at the other end of the table. The slim author had met with his match in the Devonshire-square merchant, who was something of an amateur in the profession; and the Prussian Hofgerath, von Traumer, who understood what was passing only through the shouts of laughter bestowed by young Harford and the Jewish stockbroker on the belligerents, entertained very little doubt that he was in the entertaining presence of Boz, or Theodore Hook.

"I see by the *Observer* of to-day," said Sapphic, throwing the ball for his own hands to catch,—"that Taglioni don't *draw* this year. Taglioni 'draw!'—How should she? The woman came here—"

"To *dance*!" interrupted Mr. Punchem, taking the words out of his mouth, and popping a square of venison tipped with currant jelly, into his own.

"Ha—ha—ha hi—a!—very good—excel-

lent!" faintly stammered poor Sapphic, with repressed indignation.

"The papers say *that* because they want to put forward the dancing of Duvernay," observed Harford,—seeing no joke either in the assertion or its interruption.

"Put forward the dancing of Duvernay? Why, it is only by her beauty," said Sapphic, "that Duvernay has obtained any—"

"*Footing* at the opera," interrupted his perverse enemy.

"That they assign to the pretty Pauline any *standing* as a dancer," persisted Sapphic, "is a singular proof of their own want of—"

"*Under*standing," again interrupted the demon.

"May I have the honour of a glass of wine with you, sir?" cried Sapphic, wishing the sherry might be his poison; and, as Mercator

chose Hock, they got through the ceremony without clashing.

Sir Jacob meanwhile, being a professed Rechabite, was in the habit of dowagering out of the room to a nap in his easy chair, as soon as the dessert was placed on table; and Monthermer, in no mood for Steinberger Château Margoux, Tokay, or the sparring of the professional and unprofessional wags,—was the first to follow the old gentleman into the drawing-room.

"Sit down by me"—said the Nestor of the monied interest, rubbing his eyes;—"sit down, sir—Sorry I could not have you next me at dinner—Obliged to swallow that unctuous Spanish olive (who fancies he is taking me in), and that lord and master of my nephew (who would fain take me in if he could)—Feel very differently towards them and towards your

father's son—compelled, however, to do them honour in my own house—always so—never did any thing I liked in the whole course of my life"—

"The world thinks otherwise," said Monthermer, not knowing at what point of the old man's running pattern of a discourse, to interpolate a reply.

"The world's an ass"—cried Sir Jacob. "I say I never had the smallest liberty to indulge my own likings—the world fancies I like these Sunday dinners which I would give up my little finger to leave off—for (no offence to *you*, sir) I find them vastly tedious—now if I were to close my house on Sundays people would declare it was about to close on week-days—if Sir Jacob grows too old for pleasure they'd say he's too old for business—so you see I'm obliged to tire myself to death and keep up my table to keep up my credit."

"Leaving your guests to enjoy the entertainment!" observed Monthermer, intending to be civil to the fretful old man.

"Enjoy it?—who?—Not *you*, I'm sure—never saw a man more sick of his company—Can't think what made you come here—In your situation in life, I'd have done as I liked—But *I* rose from nothing as they say in the City of those who rise from honest parents and a good education—so *I've* been passing my whole life in sowing harvests for other people to gather—Never had a minute's leisure to marry and found a family of my own—Got nothing, you see, but a flimsy fool of a nephew to inherit my fortune—can't give it to public institutions or some deserving family—the law would break my will and my nevy suborn witnesses to prove me *non compos*—so what's the use of riches—my whole life has been a martyrdom without hope of reaching the Kalendar at last!"

To divert the old gentleman's attention from his golden miseries, Monthermer hazarded a remark on the portrait opposite to which they were sitting.

"Ay! fine picture they tell me—know nothing of pictures—brought up at Merchant Taylor's on the useful knowledge system—Know it's a fine picture though—cost a mint of money—so it ought—nothing too good for the original—nothing too great for so great a man—never expected to outlive his ascendancy in this unfortunate country—a sad crisis, sir, for England and worse to come."

"I shall shock you, perhaps, by admitting that *my* principles lean to the liberal side," interrupted Lord Monthermer.

"The political principles of a good-looking lord of eight-and-twenty with a good rent-roll are not worth talking about," replied the old man. "'Tis only your broken-down place-

hunting roués like a Portumna or a Colebrooke nowadays who fling themselves heart and soul into public affairs."

"You are personally acquainted with Lord Colebrooke?"—inquired Monthermer, in an anxious tone.

"A little—With his handwriting a great deal—A great deal more than I like—A paper peace sometimes a plaguy deal worse than a paper war—Lord Colebrooke has been my banker these twenty years—calls me *his* I suppose—things don't always go by their right names."

"Do you know his daughter?"

"The girl who drove poor young Sherburne out of his senses—not I—sad artful baggage, I fancy—the only thing that made me hesitate to send my nevy Dick to Naples was the dread of her manœuvres."

"I do not conceive that Mr. Harford had much to apprehend from Lady Adelaide de

Vere!" said Lord Monthermer, drawing up, with some degree of indignation.

"Then 'tis plain *you* know less of her than I do—not that I think her silly enough to take a fancy to his silly face—but did she happen to know the sum total of his claims under a certain will it wouldn't take a week to make her Lady Adelaide Harford—she'd marry Satan, and keep house with his grannam, sir, for a good jointure—but I took care to keep down the young fellow's allowance and his expectations for fear the shark should stoop to nibble at a fly—But here comes that blockhead of a Spaniard who no doubt has been pecked to pieces and put together again by this time by your foreign official friend—and without so much as finding it out."

Conversation now became general; and while coffee was serving, Harford good-naturedly proposed to Lord Monthermer to give a cast to-

wards the West End, to his friend the author; whom it had required nearly a magnum of claret to rally under the severe mauling he had received from the heavy-handed city amateur; and "Lord Monthermer, Mr. Sapphic—Mr. Sapphic, Lord Monthermer," having been duly introduced to each other, they mutually observed that the curaçoa they were drinking was excellent, and became excellent friends. For poor Monthermer, out of sorts with his pungent old host, was eager to depart; and Sapphic, who was engaged to a Sunday conversazione, in agonies to be off.

"Does your lordship frequent much literary society?" inquired he, as the carriage turned into the city road, to coast its quiet way towards Portland Place, the head-quarters of the Blues.

"Very little; I am only just returned from Italy."

"From Italy?—'*Kennst du das land?*'—Good God!—You would be a great acquisition to my friend, Lady Trottiger, to whose party I am going. Her ladyship would be enchanted to make your acquaintance."

Lord Monthermer, having no desire to become an enchantu of Trottigers, answered not a word.

"Perhaps you feel afraid of encountering a muster of the Blues?—No fear! Very harmless people! My friend, Vivian Grey protests that the only fault to be found with the literary classes is that they are so horribly illiterate! Sad fellow my friend Vivian Grey,—but a *bon enfant*—quite a *bon enfant!*"

"A charming writer!—who will doubtless make a good politician, when he knows his own mind,—an acquaintance well worth his making."

"Very good—very good indeed!" cried

Sapphic, with a stage laugh. "Oh! I see that Lady Trottiger would delight in you!—Are you acquainted with the Young Man of the Sea, as we call Marryat, to distinguish him from the Old Man of the Sea—that bore, Fenimore Cooper?"

"I have not the honour of much acquaintance with men of letters."

"I really wonder at that!—There has been of late years such a prodigious rise in the article! Scarcely a nobleman but has put forth his octavo;—the life and times of somebody or other,—Tom Thumb or Alexander the Great! With a lord on the title-page, 'tis all one to the booksellers who or what's in the book.—As to baronets, the Athenæum positively swarms with badge-beggars.—Ah! here we are at Lady Trottiger's!—*Pray* do me the favour of allowing me the honour of presenting you."—

To spare himself the trouble of further oppo-

sition, Monthermer complied by following the showman of the Trottigers into her polite repository. He had never seen a blue party;—and people should neglect no opportunity of enlightenment.

Having been duly announced to the lady of the house, first by her page and secondly by Mr. Sapphic, his lordship bowed and smiled; while her ladyship ducked and dived; till, finding nothing to detain him by her side, he followed Mr. Sapphic into the room.

He looked, and was amazed!—An invariable feature of good society in all countries is uniformity of dress; for it is not by so paltry a thing as costume that people in their senses stoop to distinguish themselves by singularity. But the Blues are not always in their senses; and one might swear to the mere surface of a literary assemblage, by the extraordinary vaga-

ries of taste by which all present labour to prove themselves strictly original. One philosopher thinks it a proof of wisdom to dress as his father and grandfather did before him. Another, a votary of the picturesque, dotes on the richness of velvet, and eschewing broadcloth and neckcloth, Vandykes it with a naked throat.—A third, expands his skirts, enabling his pockets to contain his own prodigious MSS.; a fourth adheres to gaiters, to proclaim himself an unblushing peripatetic!—A fifth loves Hessian boots,—a sixth is curious in a pigtail,—each has his whims and oddities.

Still more preposterous is the aspect of the literary ladies. A few, blessed with the organ of inventiveness, display their imagination in the creation of caps, and composition of coëffures. The sentimentals delight in the long stray ringlets called *repentirs*, and multiply

their tendrils into the semblance of a weeping willow,—an elegy in curls;—the hard thinkers prefer a republican crop, and sport bare arms after the prints of Madame Roland;—while the turbans of certain thorough-going useful knowers, are awful as that of Ali Pacha. No two belles of an intellectual coterie bear superficial analogy with each other. They seem to belong to different centuries,—different nations; and the affair assumes the aspect of an ill-dressed fancy ball.

Struck by the discordant proportions of such a scene, Lord Monthermer trusted that the gratification of his organs of hearing would compensate for the annoyance experienced by his organs of sight. Still,—disappointment!—People go to a literary party to meet superior people,—nobody goes to be met;—and, as in a crowd proceeding onwards in the same direc-

tion, the human face divine ceases to be visible,—the human intellect ceases to shine where all go to be amused and none to be amusing.

"I am disappointed!—I came here to meet M—e," says B—r, whom fifty people present had come to meet.

"And I to be introduced to F—e," cries St. Leger Kerr, thinking it necessary to apologize to Lord Monthermer for being found in a ménagerie. "But I find he won't be here to-night. So come along!—Let us have a cigar at the Travellers'.—How I do hate these literary parties!"

"Dull enough!" replied his companion. "People who write can never talk,—people who write can never listen"—

"I am sure people who write ought never to *show*," observed Lord Monthermer, looking back as they reached the door.

"Don't judge of the 'better brothers' by this ark of creeping things!" cried B—, in a rage. "Lady Trottiger's proofs are always sadly in want of correction."

CHAPTER II.

What is't we live for?—Tell life's finest tale!
To eat,—to drink,—to sleep,—love and *be* loved—
Then, love no more!—
To talk of things we know not, and know
Nothing but things not worth the talking of!

SIR R. FANE, (JUNR.)

IF any accomplished gentlemen included among the lounging readers of my idle pages, should have undergone the penalty of waiting from a summer's dawn till three of the afternoon an appointment purporting to decide his destinies for life, *he* will appreciate all that

Messieurs Fortuné, Gossage, and Co., were fated to support from the irritability of the impatient Monthermer, ere it was time to proceed to Arlington-street on the following day. For hours did he pace his splendid library. But at half past two, entered a servant with a salver, bearing, instead of the glass of iced water for which his lordship was just then wishing, a letter in an envelope of *coquille satinée*, sealed with a delicate seal such as lovely ladies wear on their little fingers as signals for their missives of tenderness or mystery,—missives of mystery to public men, and tenderness to private. The handwriting, *à pattes de mouche*, was strange to him,—far stranger the contents.—

"Arlington-street, Monday.

"On second thoughts, I will not see you today. It will be better for me to anticipate all that my heart assures me you are about to

say, by forewarning you that we do not at present know enough of each other to hazard engagements so sacred as those to which, on Saturday night, you remotely alluded.—Let us meet as friends, my dear Lord Monthermer, (we cannot meet too often!) and it will be time enough to decide a month or two hence, whether our dispositions and views are sufficiently in unison for an eternal union. My father hopes to see you to-morrow at dinner. Give me your answer to these proposals to-night, at my Aunt Havering's; and believe me gratefully yours, A. D. V."

The first feeling of the ardent lover, on perusing this first despatch of Cupid, was, naturally enough, disappointment. But, on recovering from his momentary vexation, Lord Monthermer's views were altered. He felt that Adelaide had judged wisely for them both; that Adelaide had given the most convincing dis-

proof to all the calumnies advanced against her by her enemies. Instead of marrying Satan for an establishment and setting up house with his fiendship's grannam, she actually hesitated to ally herself with a peer of unblemished honour and unencumbered estate, and set up house in one of the most splendid mansions of the metropolis. *She chose to marry for love!*

"Be it so!" cried the happy man. "Till the close of the season, I shall see her daily,—hourly; and then—for ever and ever!"

And thus re-assured, thus satisfied that his ultimate happiness was secure, he rode, he ran, he issued cards for half a dozen dinner parties; and felt disposed to open his heart and house to all the world.

It was clear that his position, with regard to Lady Adelaide, was understood by her family; for that very day, the Sudfords left their names at his door; and though dozens of other

visiting cards were registered with theirs, it seemed as clear to him that Lord Sudford had called upon his future brother-in-law, as that the Mitchells and Longman-Tompkinsons,—the Sapphics, and Iambics, had called upon the future giver of balls. The Iambics were, of course the Trottigers,—of whom their new acquaintance, the lord, had made a decided conquest.

"Are you angry with me?" was Lady Adelaide's deprecating address, when they met that evening, (whispered with a look and smile that might have melted an iceberg!)—and the most grateful of men, of course, addressed an appropriate answer to the slender hand which was at that moment locked in his own. Vainly, however, did he attempt to draw her towards the least crowded of the rooms, in order to express more largely the feelings expanding in his bosom. It was either not Lady Adelaide's

intention to renew the happiness he had enjoyed at Lady Glenvillian's, or her popularity was increasing; for she was now importunately assailed by friends and admirers, succeeding each other too rapidly to admit of conversation apart between the lovers. It was in vain that Monthermer remonstrated. He was himself made the instrument of his own annoyance. The marquis of many crosses, the gallant Senateja, after indulging in a rhapsody of highly Spanish hyperbole touching the beauty and resplendence of the lady with whom he was conversing, implored an introduction; and Lord Monthermer had the satifaction of hearing the lordly loan-monger address the same assiduities to her *beaux yeux*, that he had previously done as the *beaux yeux de la cassette* of Sir Jacob Harford!

Still, he was by her side. *She* knew that he was hers; and, if not fully entitled to believe

her *his*, he was at least justified in anticipating such happiness by the smiles of gentle tenderness with which she occasionally rewarded his devotion. Under such circumstances, to be near those we love, is sufficient. La Bruyère tells us that, in this beatified state of mutual confidence, propinquity suffices. "*Etre avec les gens qu'on aime,—leur parler, ne leur parler pas,*"—but why recapitulate a phrase which all the circulating libraries in Christendom have pawed into commonplace.

Meanwhile, the fashionables — collected in that temple of supreme fashion the sanctuary of a ministerial priestess—began to form inferences and conjectures. Lord Monthermer's fifty thousand a year having been magnified into a hundred thousand during his first six months of inheritance, by the gossip of the clubs, as justifiably as his four thousand five hundred into five, by his butler, during his

dark ages of country baronetism, he was the great *parti* of the season;—the grand object of all the mammas of all the daughters, and a few of the daughters of some of the mammas.—Arrows had been launched against him from many a *meurtrière* invisible to his naked eye,—and he had escaped long shots that would have done honour to the rifle of a backwoodsman; had been serenaded from behind lattices,—sung at, danced at, rode at, talked at, smiled at,—been wooed through a pincushion over the counter of a fancy fair,—by the Forlorn Hope occupying a Pandora's box somewhat conspicuous in the pit tier of the King's Theatre,—and by the seven daughters (frightful as the deadly sins) of the Dowager Lady Farthingale, parading their weekly-worn sanctimoniousness in a conspicuous pew of St. George's, Hanover Square. Some had sought to dazzle him by their brilliancy,—some to soothe him by so-

briety;—some had attracted him through their vices and some through their virtues.

His comings and goings, therefore, could not pass unnoticed. The fashionable world was far more cognizant than he was himself, of the colour of the horse he mounted,—the cut of coat he sported,—the number of lustres necessary to illuminate his suite of rooms in Grosvenor Square, and the number of bright eyes which were lavishing theirs upon him in vain. The fashionable world had not overlooked his familiarity with Mary de Ligne, — nay, the honour of *his* notice had drawn public attention to the little primrose in the shade; and with the multitude of silly young dandies who sedulously trip in the footsteps of the most fashionable man of the day, Miss de Ligne was now furiously the fashion.

But no sooner had the dowagers detected his *tête-à-tête* with Lady Adelaide de Vere

at Lady Glenvillian's,—while the Duchess of Kimbolton stood aloof swelling with indignation till her stature grew and grew into something akin to Sir Walter Scott's dark lady of Glenfinlas,—than they set him down as a marked man. The red cross was upon him, as plague-stricken;—the white cross, as on some goodly oak sentenced to the axe and the market. In that reeking atmosphere of five hundred different breaths, five thousand various perfumes, and lamps and lustres beyond calculation, an atmosphere which caused the exotics adorning the room to droop their heads while the fairer flowers of human growth courted the withering of their beauty,—duchesses whispered significantly to dandies and dandies to duchesses, that it was all over with Lord Monthermer!—Lord Portumna, though apparently unconscious that there existed in the world a Lady Adelaide de

Vere,—heard,—drew down his cambric cuffs,—and vainly attempted to repress a smile.

Meanwhile, there was a world elsewhere, where these follies and misfortunes were as yet undreamed of. While fashion and the fashionables rent the air of London with the braying of their brazen trumpets, and the false goddesses of the metropolis arrayed themselves in borrowed charms, the Wroughton woods poured forth their minstrelsy unheeding; and Harry and Mary Delaval, rambling with their little baskets to seek for roots of the delicate wood sorrel or winged orchis, tormented aunt Emma as they sported by her side, with inquiries concerning the occupations which engrossed poor papa in London.

It is true Lord Monthermer was punctual in executing the commissions given him by Miss Wroughton for school books and drawing-boxes,—globes and embroidery frames. He had even

ventured to add the *dulce* to the *utile* by subjoining to the case of instruments of torture despatched to the school-room, a huge box of playthings and works of entertainment.—But though the letters to the children accompanying these tokens of interest were wise and affectionate, they neither satisfied the exacting spirit of his sister-in-law, nor sufficed to give him any preponderance in the children's affection over the memory of the mild honoured mamma, who had spoken so sweetly to them from her lingering death-bed, and whom they were now taught to revere as an angel with their father who was in heaven.—Aunt Emma and aunt Emma's aunt, laboured indeed to impress their little minds with the strongest principles of filial duty. They were bidden to remember their father in their prayers, to desire his approbation, to wish for his company;—but the exhortations of their aunts or Nurse Knowles,

could not counterbalance the fact that papa had been nearly a year absent; and such is the difference of sentiment investing the absent-dead and absent-living, that the blessed mother though absent in the body seemed with them in the spirit, while their father, separated from them by his own free-will, seemed lost to them both!—

That a mother could ever be replaced, was a worldly mystery at present beyond their comprehension. Aunt Emma, so like mamma in voice and countenance, was as much a mother to their fancy as any thing not a mother could be; but that a lady with bright bold eyes, commanding presence, brow of marble and heart of stone, could ever be presented to their love and reverence as a new mamma,—a mamma who was to supersede not only the authority but the memory of the gentle creature taken from their tenderness—was a thing impossible to

imagine; a thing almost impossible for Emma Wroughton to insinuate. One of the most arduous duties appointed to those who minister to the instruction of the young, arises from the necessity of destroying the bright illusions of their childhood; of admitting that a world inhabited by the children of wrath, abounds in wrong;—of insinuating that even those whom next to the divinity they are bound to worship, cannot be without spot or blemish. The exact moment and manner in which the veil is to be removed from eyes blindfolded by the guilelessness of perfect purity, constitutes the true difficulty of moral education!—

To the necessity of hinting some such contingency as a second marriage on the part of their father, the two kind women, so happy in their life of rural usefulness and carefulness over the little orphans, were roused by a visit from their neighbour Mrs. De Ligne; a harm-

less being who, having been brought up by Lady Mary Broderick with the notion that the grand duty of a mother of many daughters is to get them married as early and advantageously as she can, was beginning to exercise for the six Misses De Ligne the prudent forecast she had acquired as one of the seven Miss Brodericks;—the bugbear of her life, whether as daughter or mother, being a host of portionless girls.

With such views, it was of course a great source of delight when the Duchess of Kimbolton offered to take charge of her goddaughter, the eldest of the De Ligne half-dozen.—That her grace could secure a suitable establishment for her little cousin, seemed charmingly certain; but when a letter from the duchess to the squire (concerning an ensigncy in the guards for his second son) put forth in a postscript, an allusion to Mary's

conquest of Lord Monthermer, both parents were breathless with surprise.—The duchess had at first intended the match should come upon them, like a thunderbolt, somewhere about the stormy but most matrimonial period of Midsummer; but she was one of those who find it equally difficult to hold her tongue or drop her pen; and in the crisis of a letter to High Grove, could not resist putting forth the "thundering article" before its time.—

Mrs. De Ligne, a single-minded and single-sighted woman, was enchanted!—Bridgnorth Castle and fifty thousand per annum, constituted her concise view of the case; and it amazed her when the sager squire suggested that Mary, an ignorant child, was no companion for a well-read sober man of thirty, such as he had always found their neighbour;—no substitute for the admirable Lady Helmsley,—no mother-in-law for her children.—Mr. De Ligne was of

opinion that maidens like ministers, are rendered miserable and ridiculous by promotion to responsibilities beyond their faculties; and though his lady asserted that her dear girl wanted only time to become as charming a woman as she had been a charming child, she could not induce the squire to do more than shake his head, and insinuate that with all the advantages of such a match, he feared it might conduce more to the gratification of Mary's vanity than her happiness.—

It was of course provoking to the amiable parent of so many white frocks and pink sashes, to have her husband thus inconveniently sagacious,—thus bent on seeing his way into a milestone. She was, of course, no further convinced by his arguments than women usually are by the unsupported wisdom of their conjugal preceptors. But the dilemma once raised, perplexed her simple heart; and to relieve

herself from the agony of living transfixed on one of its horns, she set off to make the two spinsters at Wroughton Hall as uncomfortable as herself.

Both Mrs. Margaret and her niece had a great regard for Mrs. De Ligne. She was a valuable woman in her family, a valuable woman in her household, a valuable woman in her village;—qualifications doubly to be lauded in a damsel reared on the thirteenth subdivision of a small government pension, in a pigeon hole of the attic story of Hampton Court Palace, by a Lady Mary whose business was cards, and whose pleasure—scandal.—There was nothing either edifying or entertaining in Mrs. De Ligne's conversation, which was chiefly of the teething of her nursery or the condition of her poor. But it was clear that the good soul regarded *both* as almost equally her family,—almost equally incumbent upon her good offices;

and as she did not affect to be entertaining or conversational, at least she could not be taxed with failure. She was gifted moreover with a good hearty wide-skirted sympathy for the tooth-aches of her friends and chilblains of their children, such as commanded sympathy in return.

To sympathize with the satisfaction with which she was beginning to contemplate the prospects of her eldest daughter, was, however, a stretch of neighbourly kindness beyond the powers of Mrs. Margaret Wroughton.—The straightforward manner in which Mrs. De Ligne delivered herself of a secret which such mothers as a Lady Darling or a Lady Mary Mitchell would have kept under seven padlocks from the family of Lord Monthermer's first wife, satisfied them that she was true to her usual honest dealing on the occasion; that she no more dreamed of entrapping her noble neighbour into marrying Mary, than did the squire her

husband of wiring his lordship's hares. Emma rendered full justice to the candour with which she exclaimed—" Well now, if so strange a thing *should* really come to pass, *do* you think Mary would settle down and grow steady enough to make a good mother to those children, and do honour to such a position in society?—You see, poor child, she is not the least cut out for a great lady.—She has been brought up in a plain way to say every thing that comes into her head, and do every thing she does not consider wrong; —and I'm afraid she would make a sad figure in fashionable life. I'm sure it passes *my* comprehension how Lord Monthermer could ever have thought of taking a fancy to a child like Mary!"

Still more did it pass the comprehension of her auditresses;—and the elder aunt was almost out of patience with Emma, for the patience with which, after Mrs. De Ligne's departure, she seemed to resign herself to the

impending catastrophe. The good aunt neither wept nor wailed over the overclouded destinies of Mary and Harry.

"You don't even seem surprised, my dear?" cried the old lady, who had gone to the unusual extent of taking off her spectacles that her attention might be undistracted by more pleasing external objects from her uneasy meditations.

"I have long ceased to be surprised at any weakness exhibited by poor William!" replied Miss Wroughton, with tolerable composure.

"But if not surprised, at least you may feel provoked by such an extraordinary piece of folly?"

"He might have done worse."

"*Worse*?—Worse than marrying a girl of seventeen,—without fortune or connexions."

"He is too rich for fortune to be an object; and the De Lignes are as well-born as ourselves."

"Without experience, then, or knowledge of

the world;—a girl who will have fifty children, like her mother. Think what an evil a young family would be to our own darlings!"—

"An *old* family might be worse. He *might* have married a person whose relations would prove far more injurious to the children than twice fifty brothers and sisters. He might have married a person whose profound experience of the world would have been a thousand fold more detestable than Mary's ignorance. The girl is a good girl;—has seen nothing all her life but examples of steadiness and virtue. Her mind will strengthen. Responsibility will confirm her character,—as the water-bearers of India are trained to uprightness by the weight they are required to carry. The only dissatisfying point in the business is the contradiction it brings to my own sagacity. I had always fancied Mary attached to poor Gerald."

"To your brother?—My dearest Emma!—What whims *do* enter your head."

"Admit at least that I cherish no vagaries on my own account. All my love plots are for my friends."

"So much the worse my dear!" cried aunt Margaret (who was apt to attribute her niece's love of retirement to unavowed attachment for a certain Basil Hamilton, the school and college friend of Gerald, who was plodding his way to as much fame and fortune as can be preached into by a young curate, for whom worth and ability are to stand in lieu of patronage and connexion). "So much the worse my dear.—I shall be miserable unless, within the next five years, I see you happily married."

"Five years?—Humph!—That was just about the space of time I allowed for Mary De Ligne to acquire the merits indispensable to fix the affections of my brother, and for Gerald to become sensible to their attractions," said Emma, evading the question. "But in that quarter, I fear I am fated to disappointment. *Femme*

propose — Dieu dispose! — Gerald's cleverness has not secured him from an attachment to a heartless woman of the world; nor Mary's insignificance from fixing the fancy of a man so vacillating as Monthermer."

"But, my dear child, we have only her mother's word for the conquest?"

"Mrs. De Ligne's is a more honest word than that of many a cleverer woman."

"But Mrs. De Ligne repeats only what has been communicated to her by the Duchess of Kimbolton?"

"Well, even the duchess is not too clever to be trusted. From all I have heard of her, I judge her to be a self-sufficient empty person, fond of managing the affairs of other people and prosing about her own; but scarcely so mischievous as to tantalize her country cousins with false reports of the happy prospects of their child."

"But she may be mistaken,—my dear,—she *may* be mistaken."

"I rather hope not,"—replied Emma, with a degree of *sang froid* altogether annoying to her aunt. "I have long made up my mind to love Mary De Ligne as a sister;—I could very easily reconcile myself to love her as a sister-in-law."

CHAPTER III.

Hear my soul speak!—
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; for your sake,
Am I this patient logman.

THE TEMPEST.

THE same summer sun that brightened the flower-beds and yielded charms to the wooded shades of old Wroughton, was glittering in London over the toys of vanity and the variegated frippery of that paradise of coquettes. The bauble of the fool Frivolity was brandished in all its plenitude of power; and the winged

tribes of fashion were every where in movement.

Various as were their incitements to vivacity, the event which next after Ascot races motived their animation, was the ball for which cards had been issued by Lord Monthermer. Lady Adelaide was apparently of opinion that the sooner a ticket of SOLD was affixed to the frame of the picture she had appropriated as her own, the better for her purpose—(or rather purposes —for it is rarely that a single aim suffices the manœuvring instincts of the true policizer;*) and the engaged man was permitted to spread his canvas in temporary rooms, and bespeak his bowers of bliss in superfine exotics.

A new ball-giver in London is a man of considerable importance. A first ball is regarded as a pledge, promising balls hereafter;—

* A designation suggested to Miss Edgeworth by an Irish peasant.

a fine maiden speech, or a fine fête,—conferring, for a week or two, pretty nearly the same personal distinction. The ball-giver, however, has the best of it; *his* efforts being prefaced by a fortnight's announcement and popularity; while the orator's influence over the public mind is necessarily forbidden to cast its brightness before. To produce proper effect, his triumph must be spontaneous, and take the world by surprise.

The newspapers seemed determined that Lord Monthermer's ball should take no one by surprise but himself!—For full eight days after the issue of his cards, they kept amazing him and delighting the public with accounts of the magnitude of his preparations;—a benefit concert could not have been more outrageously puffed. Little suspecting that the Sapphic of this peculiar branch of the *belles lettres* was no other than the Sieur Gossage, who, with his

own per centage on the bills in view, was resolved that his lord and master should realize the fairy dreams of his invention, Lord Monthermer daily enlarged his preceding projects; and, in proportion to their excess, found applications for invitations increase and multiply. Young ladies seemed to fancy that the fête was intended as a sort of beauty review, such as in fairy tale books enable young princes to select a bride among their subjects; and even those who had no hope of becoming Lady Monthermer, were on the *qui vive* for so fashionable a fête. There was a glorious uncertainty about it.—Some said it was to be a fancy ball; and others, (shocked at the notion of a private fancy ball,) asserted that it, on the contrary, was *voué au blanc*,—that every one was to appear in white; and while many and various were the rumours, each wrought an accession of importance.

The Duchess of Kimbolton, who had been sporting grand with Lord Monthermer from the evening at Lady Glenvillian's which brought to light (by keeping in the shade,) his flirtation with Lady Adelaide,—anxious to procure an invitation for her friend Lady Clementina and her grim sisterhood, but determined not to stoop from the altitude she had assumed towards the offender, deputed her brother Lord Carpynter to make the request, as for himself. To assign importance to any thing unconnected with the political world, and undraggable into a pamphlet or even a didactic dinner-prose, was, of course, out of his lordship's nature. Instead, therefore, of observing the *réticences* suggested by his sister, Carpynter contented himself with saying to his friend in the street, the first time chance brought them together, "My sister Kimbolton desires me to say you will oblige her by sending cards

for your ball to Lady Clementina Pryse and her two sisters. They will be no great ornament to your rooms; but they are sworn friends of the duchess."

Lord Monthermer, too goodnatured to refuse, though he would just as willingly have issued invitations to the Destinies and their distaffs, promised compliance; but, having inadvertently added some trifling remark upon the pains and penalties attending all givers and giving of fêtes, he was warned of his rashness by Lord Carpynter's exclamation of—"True! I have no doubt you are amazingly bothered.—But why not throw the *onus* off your hands, by getting some lady of your acquaintance to preside—to issue or refuse invitations—a sort of lady patroness?—I am sure my sister—"

Lord Monthermer started! But the necessity of instantly forestalling the completion of so fatal a sentence, suggested a remedy.—

"I quite agree with you!"—cried he, affecting to have heard only the sympathizing comment of his friend. "I will go this moment to the Duchess of Havering; who is acquainted with all the foreigners as well as the London people, and the best-natured person in the world."

It was of course impossible to assign such a task to Lady Adelaide; and he felt that she would prefer having the office executed by her aunt. Nor was Lord Carpynter more prompt in applauding his friend's selection,—than the duchess in confirming the appointment. In the Havering family, the mere words "acceptance of office," seemed to convey an agreeable impression.

Lord Monthermer was surprised, meanwhile, to find himself blamed by her grace and her grace's niece on exposing the host of invitations

to their inspection, as much for his sins of omission as of commission.

"I do not perceive Lady Wycombe's name?" observed Lady Adelaide, after perusing the muster-roll of the fashionables laid before her.

"Lady Wycombe's?—Of course not!—Could you imagine me capable of inviting a woman you so much dislike?"—

"But nobody consults likings or dislikings in giving a ball!—Lady Wycombe's absence would be destruction to your fête. She is a woman too well established to be injured by being left out. You would burn your own fingers without attaining her.—Dear Lord Monthermer!—Lady Wycombe *must* be invited."

"Any one and every one you please.—It was in compliment to yourself I struck her name out of the list made up by Gossage."

"I hope Gossage may have kept your coun-

sel!—It would not do to make an enemy of Lady Wycombe!"—

Monthermer was silent;—secretly of opinion that nothing could be less important to a man of his standing in the world, than the enmity of any fashionable countess in the land.

"If you think it desirable to avoid giving offence," said he, after a pause, "let us send a card to the Chertseys, whom I omitted on account of their conduct to Lady Sudford."

"The Chertseys?—Quite a different affair!—You did right to leave out the Chertseys.—Not on Helena Sudford's account, (for you must not be too hasty in taking up the championship of the family); but because you do yourself honour in the eyes of the better half of society, by setting at defiance such a horde of barbarians as the De Bathes;—people who have nothing to recommend them but their birth and respecta-

bility. No greater set of quizzes in London, than Lady Chertsey and her family!"—

"Still, as I went to her ball,"—

"You were *taken* there, in unsuspecting innocence, by the Duchess of Kimbolton. It would be sinning with your eyes open to establish an acquaintance with the Chertseys, now you are aware of the inveteracy of their case."—

"Their *case*?"—

"The inveteracy of their dulness. The De Bathes would be a blemish in your ball-room and afford you no compensation;—sort of people of, from, or by whom, nothing is to be gained. But what name do I see here?—Long—Long man—surely you have not carried your good-nature to such weakness as to ask the Longman-Tompkinsons?—That dreadful woman!"—

"She was so hospitable to us all at Naples;—and she is such a civil inoffensive woman!"—

"*Inoffensive!*—with that countenance,—that shape,—that name!—As to her hospitality,—a mere matter of policy!—It was only by having us at her house, she obtained a footing in society. Those people went abroad to catch a few stray people of fashion, who, when on the wing, are glad to alight on any perch presented to them."

"Still, as we *did* alight upon it"—

"The woman *must* have understood that the acquaintance was merely temporary.—She could not expect us to know her on our return from Italy."

"Indeed she did!"—

"Then she is worse than I supposed her;—she can know nothing of the world!"—

"At all events, forgive *me* for having invited her. I cannot but return a certain degree of affection for Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson!—It

was at *her* house, dearest Lady Adelaide, we first began to understand each other."

At this allusion, Madonna Laura had the decency, or the conscience to blush. Certain reminiscences of treachery towards poor Wroughton, called up into her mind a train of thoughts and feelings, with which she could have well dispensed. The chief effect of these, however, was to remind her that that the fashionable Lord Monthermer had once been the unfashionable Sir William Helmsley; and that in her recent frankness of speech, she had perhaps been too unguarded.—Monthermer was not the man to be favoured with a display of worldly tactics such as would have assumed in the eyes of the Duke of Wexford, or Alexis Bagot, the authority of the Pandects of Justinian.

"I am affording you these hints," said she, resuming her usual gentle demeanour and plau-

sible voice, " comprehending, from your readiness to enter the lists of fashion, that you intend to take out your freedom of a community which Sudford calls the City of the Plague. But if you consult my personal feelings, you will invite every one from whom you have received attentions, or from whom you would find them acceptable. After all, as you have placed your list in the hands of my aunt, you can do no better than adhere to her arrangements. It is impossible to possess a finer tact than the duchess in all matters relating to *les convenances.*"

Lord Monthermer heartily assented. He did more:—he promised to invite no person who had not previously received a sentence of approval from her grace. So luckless were his stars, however, that he found himself fastened upon that very morning on the staircase of the British Gallery, by Mrs. Longman-Tompkin-

son, with a pathetic appeal to his feelings in favour of a fair pretendant. He began, indeed, almost to agree in Lady Adelaide's condemnation of the lady's pushing presumption, when he found her directly referring to the civilities he had received from her at Naples.

"My dear Lord Monthermer!" cried she, in a voice purporting to make her familiarity a matter of envy to all the idlers passing by,—"I was just going to despatch a note to you—you *must* do me a favour!"

"If it should happen to regard an invitation—" he began—but the lady was too energetic to listen.

"Every body tells me," she resumed, "that it is as difficult to get to your ball as to Almacks'. But, as I was saying last night to Sir Kenelm Hulme (who came to visit Miss Mitchell in my box at the Opera), after having the range of my house at Naples, and living in

such intimacy, it is not Mr. Longman-Tompkinson or *me* that Lord Monthermer would think of refusing!"

"Of course not," he replied, representing to himself the cool fastidious face of Sir Kenelm while listening to the charge against him of such an intimacy; "but the whole arrangements of my ball are placed in the hands of the Duchess of Havering. I have no longer the privilege of issuing an invitation. If you are acquainted with the duchess—"

"Dear me, how very provoking!" interrupted the disappointed lady. "But surely if you were to speak to her—"

"It is in order to deny myself the pleasure of saying 'Yes!' to every fair applicant of my acquaintance, which would render my rooms in Grosvenor Square too full, that I have placed the business under the control of a lady."

"Well, I declare I never heard any thing so extraordinary!" cried the lady. "I always used to like to have my balls in Carlton Terrace crammed as full as possible.—To be sure, what odd customs do come into fashion!—The idea of wanting to have a thin ball!—I should as soon think of ordering a thin haunch of venison!"

"The Duchess of Havering is a near relation of Lady Adelaide de Vere," observed Monthermer, hoping to get rid of his companion by mentioning a name so unacceptable.

"Oh! she is, is she?"—replied the lady of Carlton Terrace, with a fallen countenance. "Then I may just as well tell my friend, little Mrs. Grigson, to give up all thoughts of the ball. Poor soul!—it's rather hard upon her; I promised her so faithfully to get her a ticket! A sweet creature, too, and in such an interesting situation. Married only ten days, and her husband obliged to go off as ensign in the British

Legion! Can't you do any thing for her about the ticket?" said Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson, interrupting herself, to appeal by a coaxing smile to the sympathies of her auditor. But Monthermer's negative was now determined.

Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson was not to be thus easily distanced. In the course of the daily drone in the park to which she dedicated sixty hours per month throughout the season, she encountered and revealed her tale of woe to Lord Royston, who made light as a feather of Lord Monthermer's refusal.

"Why the deuce did you apply to *him*?" cried his lordship, with an air of contempt.

"Not apply to him about his own ball?"

"He has nothing further to do with it. The Duchess of Havering settles every thing but the bills."

"But I don't know the duchess."

"No, no; leave all that to *me*."

"You will ask her for me?"

"Not I!"

"Well, I declare—"

"I shall ask Loxley."

"And who is Loxley, pray?"

"A great friend of mine."

"But what has he to do with Lord Monthermer's ball?—Is he the duchess's groom of the chambers?"

"Ha! ha! ha!—My dear Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson, good morning!—Where shall I send the ticket?"

"To our hotel, please. Our mansion in Carlton Terrace, you know, is let to the Brazilian ambassador."

And away galloped Royston, with as much idea of fulfilling his promise as of paying more than the interest of his debts.

Lord Monthermer's moments, meanwhile, were seldom thwarted by such vexatious interruptions as that of his Neapolitan hostess. They were passed, with rare intervals, by the side of the loveliest of her sex; a woman endowed with gifts of form and mind worthy to realize the poet's dreams of Cleopatra. Lady Adelaide's talents seemed universal. She spoke with elegance several languages,—was a perfect musician,—a skilful artist,—had read much,—observed much; and with all these endowments, united a liveliness of mind rarely to be found among persons encumbered with superficial accomplishments. Lord Monthermer's time fled like a dream, while the talents of his future bride were exerted for his gratification; and after a morning passed in music or conversation, in a drawing-room sometimes solitary but oftener crowded with the most distinguished persons of the day, to whom she

did its honours with a grace and suavity peculiarly her own, he was permitted to escort her in her daily ride, accompanied for propriety's sake by Lord or Lady Sudford.

Were sublunary happiness secured by such contingencies, Monthermer's position might now be pronounced without a drawback. Entitled to lavish on the object of his idolatry the devotion which a passionate lover lays at the feet of his mistress, and the extrinsic homage which so few passionate lovers are in a situation to render, he was able to welcome her like a queen to his threshold;—to secure to her caprices the rare exotic she wished to obtain,—the new work she chose to be the first to open.—They were always together;—their life was a continual *tête-à-tête*, enjoyed amid the crowds of fashionable society;—and so enthralling were the new habits of life of the now *un*sobered Monthermer, that he scarcely regretted the

publicity of the life to which he was condemned.

The splendid beauty of Lady Adelaide, commanding admiration wherever she appeared and exciting even among her enemies warm admiration, seemed formed for society. Glorying in her triumphs and touched by the deep feeling with which she turned to him from the admiration of the world, he felt that the Eden he was to share with such an Eve ought not to be solitary. Gifted as she was to embellish solitude, it was not solitude in which he wished to place her. He had perhaps had enough of solitude. The nature of things had been reversed for Sir William Helmsley. Estranged in boyhood from the scenes of joy and dissipation that yield delight to boys, he was engrossed by delights of which he had been originally defrauded. Instead of the enlightened man who, disgusted by the empty pomps

of life, turns for happiness to domestic peace, the man so long domesticated that he was grown weary of such still monotony, rushed free and fearless into the tumults of a life of dissipation, with a heart new to its charms and a soul unwarned against its delusions.

If at times, a gleam of prudence, an impulse of right-mindedness, interfered to check him in his career, it was instantly dissipated by the incantations of his beauteous Circe.

"Will you believe that I am half inclined to be jealous?" said Monthermer, one morning, as he sat overlooking Lady Adelaide who was copying a miniature of his two children, executed by Mrs. Robertson previous to the death of their mother.

"Jealous?"—echoed the fair artist, a deepening blush betraying her apprehensions lest a momentary interview with Lord Portumna the preceding night, in the doorway of the ancient

concert, might have arrested the attention of her Othello.—" Of whom?—Of the Duke of Wexford, with whom we dine to day,—or—"

" Of no mortal man, thank heaven!"—cried Lord Monthermer, with much earnestness. " *That* were a trial wholly beyond my fortitude. I am jealous of a woman,—an *old* woman."

" And I of a *young* one!"—said Lady Adelaide, looking up from her palette with a lovely smile.—" Did you imagine me so deaf or heedless, as not to overhear Miss De Ligne's apostrophe to you last night?—' You *must* give me a card for your ball for Basil Hamilton, dearest Lord Monthermer,' said she, ' I won't be turned over to the Duchess of Havering. Remember that Mr. Hamilton is Gerald Wroughton's bosom friend.' What right, pray, had she to call you ' *dearest* Lord Monthermer?' "

" The frankness of poor Mary's address might have assured you that she regards me as too

old to be of any consequence. Mary treats me like a father, or rather like a grandfather."

"I am not satisfied to see your attentions commanded by so pretty a grandchild."

"Nor I to find yours run away with by so frightful a grandmother."

"Ah, now I begin to understand you!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide. "You cannot overcome your prejudices against poor Lady Phalaris. But I am obliged to receive the old lady; she is Lady Sudford's near relation."

"So is Lady Chertsey, whom you have without scruple dismissed from your acquaintance."

"But Lady Chertsey is such a fearful bore! My brother (when he was paying his addresses to Emily de Bathe) used to call her the tortoise in pattens;—so slow-paced, yet with such an everlasting clack!"

"She is at least respectable," said Lord Monthermer, gravely.

"So has poor Lady Phalaris been, for the last fifty years. At eighty, surely one has a right to general absolution—to a general amnesty."

"Not while avowing such loathsome principles as those of Lady Phalaris."

"Fie, fie!—I never heard you so censorious."

"Lady Phalaris is nothing to *me*, unless when I see her corrupting the mind of one I love."

"You think me in danger from Lady Phalaris?"—

"Heaven forbid! But I would not see a noxious reptile crawl over a rose, even though its influence left no taint behind."

"A noxious reptile?—What can make you so inveterate against the poor old dowager?"—

"The habits of her life,—the tone of her conversation,—the altered character of the women whom I have seen successively submitted to her influence."

"Yet, believe me, she gives them excellent lessons—"

"Of respect for the proprieties of life,—*not* for the principles of virtue. Look at Lady Sudford, her favourite pupil,—how artful, how artificial!—Bloom, ringlets, smiles, sentiments, —*what* does Lady Sudford exhibit in the way of attraction, that is essentially her own? I would rather have a woman ugly—absolutely ugly—than pretty, by the force of so much art."

Monthermer had talked himself out of breath; and Lady Adelaide sat contemplating him with amazement. She had not thought the apathetic man could be thus roused. Perhaps it even passed through her mind that though the lover had become so much her slave, the husband might hereafter break out anew into the early pragmaticality of the country baronet! Her most urgent business was to efface all

trace of Sir William Helmsley in Lord Monthermer.

"It is grievous to enter upon the defence of a friend at the cost of my sister-in-law," said she. "But, as you must have perceived, poor Sudford (who, though wild, is the best creature in the world) has not been happy in his choice. Emily Sudford has been injudiciously brought up,—has a trifling, uncultivated mind,—and so total an incapacity for occupation, that the levity of her character seems almost a natural infirmity. Lady Phalaris never could have made her wiser or better: it is, therefore, something that she may have rendered her more prudent."

"I had rather—"

"But the true motive of my intimacy with Lady Phalaris," continued Lady Adelaide, preventing his rejoinder, "is the kindness received from her by my mother, thirty years ago, long

previous to her marriage, when left an orphan in the colony of which Lord Phalaris was governor. Under such circumstances, I am convinced you would not wish me to abandon an old friend who cannot have many years to live;—who has met with reverses in life, and borne them nobly;—and who is keenly sensible to the neglect she receives from the world."

"All your motives are good,—all your measures dictated by the best and purest spirit of womanly kindness!"—exclaimed Monthermer, gazing with a lover's infatuation on the countenance beaming in full brightness upon his face. "Promise me only that you will listen with mistrust to the counsels of one whose life has been a tissue of irregularities, and whose principles consist in the Spartan system of impunity through cunning and address."

"No conditions!"—cried Lady Adelaide,

laying aside her work. "Leave me at least the happiness of *divining* your wishes, and submitting to them of my own free will."

"Angel!"—cried the country baronet.

"Blockhead!"—thought the woman of the world. "And now," cried she, disentangling her fair hands from the impassioned grasp of Lord Monthermer, "leave me a moment's respite to put on my habit!—Sudford is to be ready for us at five; and I fancy the horses are at the door."

CHAPTER IV.

Fluellen. Though he were as goot a gentleman as the tevil is, 'tis necessary, look your grace, that he keep his vow and his oath. If he be perjured, he is a villain as ever his black shoe trod Got's earth, la!

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was some mornings after this conversation that Monthermer, who had been detained till a late hour the preceding night at a ball given by the Duchess of Kimbolton (which, per aid of the duchess's money, the odd man's exertions, and Miss De Ligne's growing popularity, turned

out a brilliant and successful affair), was roused at an early hour, with tidings that an old gentleman was in the drawing-room, waiting to speak to him.

"Who on earth can want to see me at this hour!—Why did not Gossage deny me?" said he, waking into an ill humour.

"Milor! Monsieur Cossiche *did* deny—he deny every ting. He say you out,—you not in de town,—you not in de countree!—De gentelman no be refuse—*persévérant comme quelque diable de créancier!*"—added Fortuné, concealing the last phrase behind the brocaded dressing-gown of a master too well off in pocket and principle to be troubled with duns.

"Go to this person, and bid him call again at two o'clock," said Monthermer, closing his eyes and rejecting the *robe de chambre*.

"Milor—dis person have an air as if not accustom to be bid!" said the sagacious For-

tuné. "Here was his card—Sir Jacob somesing.—*C'est peut-être un fils d'Abraham!*" was the secret commentary of the valet,—puzzled to guess what could have brought the lord of Bridgnorth Castle into contact with the Jews.

"Sir Jacob Harford!"—cried Monthermer, starting up. And, within five minutes, he was in the drawing-room, heartily apologizing for having kept waiting the old friend of his father.

"No matter—no matter!"—replied the old gentleman, hobbling round the splendid apartments, and ascertaining by touch, as well as view, the quality of their ornaments. "Amused myself vastly here looking at all your gimcracks—live in my own den in ignorance of the march of vanity and folly—prodigious strides I see since last I took note of such matters—puzzled to guess sometimes how people manage to run through the vast sums they draw out of my hands—know that a fool and

his money are soon parted but couldn't guess into what wise hands the money fell after the parting — cunning dogs these new-fangled upholsterers—varnish up deal and maple not worth a crown till it shines like satin in a drawing-room and diamonds in the bill—such trash—not fifty guineas' worth of tangible property in your range of rooms—my Mercury would buy the whole plenishing out and out—wretched waste as ever I saw in my life—got such a thing in the house as a picture of my old friend, Sir Robert?"—

"My father's portrait, by Sir Joshua, is at Helmsley Abbey," replied Monthermer; somewhat provoked at having been started out of bed at nine in the morning, to hear his house and furniture abused by an old gentleman, who had travelled all the way from the heart of the city apparently for no other purpose.

"Your fellows would scarcely let me in—not fine gentleman enough for such vastly fine gentlemen's gentlemen—told me you had been up till five—late division, I suppose—what was before the House?"

"I have not seen the morning papers—I was at the Duchess of Kimbolton's ball."

"At a ball—the lord pity you—and so the huge duchess helps off my poor constituent with his cash by giving fashionable entertainments—sad silly folks both of 'em—he a dull dummy—she a foolish chatterpye—wonderful how many modes people find nowadays of wasting time and money—there's the Duke of Wexford eats himself into difficulties—there's Lord Loxley races himself into difficulties—there's Lord Royston dices himself into difficulties—and there's yourself who are sighing yourself into difficulties."

"*Sighing* myself?" interrupted Monthermer, unable to repress a smile at the old banker's petulance.

"And my mind misgives me that *your* embarrassments will be the worst of 'em all—*may* pay off a cook—*may* sell off a stud—*may* take leave of the dice-box—but a wife's a perpetual blister to worry a man out of his wits."

"Pray sit down, my dear Sir Jacob, and explain yourself more at leisure," said Lord Monthermer, foreseeing the vexations to which he was about to be exposed. "Pray sit down."

"In a rocking-chair—thank you for nothing—not in my second childhood yet awhile—ay this sofa will do—but as I was saying I hear from my ninny of a nephew who though he can't talk can hear—that you're going to marry that girl—that woman—that widow bewitched—of my Lord Colebrooke's. Now I've just one thing I feel it my duty to say t'ye—she's no

more divorced or divorceable from poor young Sherburne than my poor friend Bob Helmsley was from Lady Caroline. I know what I'm saying—if you marry her the marriage will be a dishonoured acceptance—the marriage won't be worth a pea-straw."

"That objection, my dear sir, will not long hold good"—observed Lord Monthermer, trying to be as little as possible in a passion. "I saw last week a certificate from the attendants of the unfortunate man to whom you allude (from whom Lady Adelaide was legally divorced by a decree of court), attesting the impossibility of his surviving beyond a few weeks."

"In that case I have nothing to urge on the score of bigamy"—coolly replied the old gentleman—"but I *will* say to the son of my old and honoured friend that he is about to throw himself away—Colebrooke married that girl after a fortnight's acquaintance to poor Sher-

burne notoriously more than half a lunatic to save herself or her reputation out of the clutch of Lord Portumna—and now he's going to foist her off on *you* that he may break up his establishment and live on what friends he has left —couldn't imagine where they'd found funds to dash away another season in town—find your wise uncle the earl left them a legacy—so they're hastening to verify the proverb that what's got over the devil's"—

"I am sorry once more to remind you, my dear Sir Jacob,"—interrupted Lord Monthermer, speaking seriously but with great forbearance, "that Lord Shropshire was my mother's brother,—that Lord Colebrooke is my personal friend. Should the reports be realized with which Mr. Harford has favoured you, I trust it will not be impossible to remove the prejudices you appear to have imbibed against the family."

"Knew it was running my head against a stone wall to argue with a man in love—," cried the banker—"can't help it—done my duty to the dead and living—pity they hadn't managed to marry her to young Bridgnorth—there she'd have been paired as well as matched."

"You were acquainted with my cousin?"

"Knew him as one knows the pillory—by its bad name—nothing more—curious genius young Bridgnorth—made a figure in trade if he'd been born a cit—contrived to turn even his vices to account—made money by play—made money by the turf—made money by horses—dogs—carriages—drove a tilbury and a bargain better than e'er a young fellow on the stones—a thriving pedlar spoilt when Lord Bridgnorth was born to a peerage."

"My relations obtain as little quarter as my friends!" said Lord Monthermer, dreading what might chance to follow. "I am more

graciously disposed towards you. How is Harford? When does he return to Naples?"

"Never. Lord Portumna who pretends to have taken a fancy to him—a farsighted spec, unless I'm much mistaken—is going to Russia and has applied to the Foreign Office for master Dick to bear him company—lucky enough perhaps—For Raymond Horton, the new man at Naples, is too shrewd a fellow to wish to be troubled with such an unserviceable commodity."

"And what is Harford doing in the interim?"

"Making an ape of himself somewhere hereabouts—expected to have news of him from *you*—don't often see him in the city—should'nt be sorry to settle him in life out of the way of such leeches as your Colebrookes and Portumnas."

"I should imagine there would be little

difficulty in obtaining a suitable match for your nephew."

"Such as *he* or *you* might fancy suitable—I'm old fashioned enough to care for allying myself with the daughter of an honest man—but as I find the mischief-mongering newspapers have set it about that Dick Harford's heir to a couple of millions—we shall soon be having sealed tenders sent in for his hand—hope he'll be in better luck than others whom I could mention—good morning sir—recommend you to go to bed again and finish your nap—look plaguy tired I can tell you—either of me or your raking."

And having desired that his own attendant might be summoned to assist him down stairs, the crabbed old banker took his departure, grumbling all the way to the carriage, in his usual cadences of asthmatic muttering.

The intelligence meanwhile with which Lord

Monthermer had parried Sir Jacob's charge of bigamy against Lady Adelaide, was strictly correct. Lord Sherburne was indeed in his last moments; and any lingering scruple with which Monthermer was affected concerning the legality of Lady Adelaide's second marriage must now be set at rest. The child, about to enter into possession of a princely fortune, was to reside with the dowager at Naples; and in forming a new alliance, nothing would remain to Lady Adelaide in memory of the first but the happy contrast afforded by her union with an intelligent and amiable companion. On this most delicate topic (except when exhibiting the intimation she had received of Lord Sherburne's approaching release), strict silence was preserved by all parties. Both seemed afraid of interposing a syllable capable of giving pain to either; both seemed unwilling to mar the perfect unison of these innocent happy feelings.

" *Bon jour mon cher!*—was delight to see you!" cried Count Flaszaski, sauntering into the room which, on Sir Jacob's deliberate departure, Lord Monthermer in his dressing-gown was hastening to quit. " Vas stop at my friend Lynchwell (your neighbour) door,—ven I see your apoticaire drive off. *Ah! ce n'était pas l'apothicaire?—n'importe! Il en avait bien l'air,—et nourri même de ses drogues.* Vell! I tink I was never should see you again! *D'abord que je vous fasse mon compliment.* I see by the journals you about to change your estates."

" Indeed I was not aware of it. Which of them?" inquired Monthermer, referring Flaszaski's observation to some advertisement or other touching the Bridgnorth property, issued by Messrs. Cognovit.

" Vish?—Your estates of solitary blessingness, as it vas call in Inghiland. De morning

paper assure you give de ball, becos you take de vife!"

"The morning papers?—How annoying! how impertinent!—What a curse is entailed by the officiousness of the newspapers in this country!"

"You give dem de liberty of de press, and dey take de liberties!—Eh?—*c'est ça je crois, n'est ce pas?*—But if dey bore you, vat more easily silence?—I have got every journal of London in my pocket."

"The deuce you have!" exclaimed Monthermer, wondering how little the symmetry of the count was distorted by so extensive a freight.

"*I* very well know how manage dem all. Some was de dirty *éditeur,* one should buy at so much per sheet. Some vas de fasionab' *éditeur, dont on graisse la patte* vid oder tings dan monies."

"With what?"—demanded Monthermer, curious to learn the consistency of the last new-invented palm-oil.

"*Mais avec l'huile de roses!*—I sake hand vid dem at de Opera,—give dem de seat in my cab up St. James's Street von rainy day, and tell dem *chez* Crockfor, dat de *monstre* vat I bearlead vas my *banquier!*—De fasionab' *éditeur* vas love to hear it thought dey vas on de intimate foot' vid de fasionab' Graf von Flaszaski! *L'animal veut faire accroire à son espèce qu'il sait vivre,—qu'il est des nôtres,*—and so I make heem my own. I vas do vot I like vid de *journalistes.* Dey vorship my vit,—my *bon-ton,*—my *bonne mine,*—my *aimabilité,*—*et s'il s'agissait de me trouver un beau jour moins aimable, ma foi, on en vient aux extrémités!—Il y a toujours pour le coup, un coup de cravâche!*"

"You stand, I see, on no ceremony with your *friends,*" said Monthermer, laughing at

the gesture which Flaszaski suited to the word.

"Or dey would be vorse dan de enemy!" replied Flaszaski. "Vill you dat I should arrange for you dis affair, *pour que cela ne vous coûte rien?*"—

"Many thanks!—The mischief is already done!—Besides, the less one meddles in such matters, the less chance of dirtying one's fingers."

"Ah! you do not tink I would interfere personally?—No! I vas have too many iron in de stove! I send vord to *Monsieur l'éditeur* trough de great man of his partie,—some *ex-chancelier* or lord of de *trésorerie* vot is to be. I get *mein freund*, Lor' Carpyntarie to give his ordaire to de Torie;—I get *mein freund*, Lor' Loxley give his ordaire to de Duke d'Evering to give his ordaire to de Vig!—Ah! I hav' mein irons every vhere in de stove!"

A vast deal of trouble about nothing, I should imagine," said Monthermer, more disgusted than amused. " A better way is to do nothing one is ashamed of, and let the press have its say."

" But vish man of us go trough de life, and do noting he was shame of?"—inquired Flaszaski, (much in the tone of the Abbé Prevost, who, having accidentally killed his father, used to swear that no man lived till the age of thirty without meriting the hulks:—" *Moi-même tel que vous me voyez, j'ai tué mon père.*") Then, perceiving Monthermer's countenance to be unapproving, he added,—" *Vous-même,* mein dear lor' you give de ball in June, without take de roof off your house to keep de dancers from suffocate;—*et ce pauvre Vexfor'*—he take us yesterday to a *diner prié,* at Blackvall, and give us *les coquilles d'écrevisses,*—to stand face to de currie of srimp;—salt to fress,—vite to brown!

Coulis s'est trouvé mal à notre retour, rien qu'en jetant l'œil sur le menu!—Is not dose ting to be shame of?"—

"Who had you at Wexford's party?" inquired Monthermer, thinking it necessary to say something in answer to the Flaszaski farrago.

"Who ve had?—*Ma foi! je n'ensais rien.*—Ven one dine to dine, I considaire *vat* ve have, not *who.*—Dere vas—But I prevent you dress?—Have you breakfast?—*Non?—eh! tant mieux,—je suis à vous!*—Ve vill *dejeuner* togeder.—I vas engage breakfass with Lynchvell—it shall be for anoder day. *Allons!—Tout en dépêchant le déjeûner je vais vous raconter la plus drôle d'histoire—l'histoire la plus piquante—*(*et même un peu scabreuse*) vish you vas ever hear—vish regard *cette jolie petite Madame de Sudford*!—Ah! you breakfass in your boudoir?—*Tant mieux*!—Ve shall at our ease talk vid-

out fear of de droppers of Eves;—*joli mot que vous avez inventé là*—to prove (*sans doute*) *que la curiosité date de la création!*"

And once more, poor Monthermer found himself under the necessity of giving ear to a tale of scandal involving persons nearest and dearest to Lady Adelaide de Vere!

CHAPTER V.

Laissons à la belle jeunesse
Ses folâtres emportemens ;—
Nous ne vivons que deux momens,
Qu il en soit un pour la sagesse.

VOLTAIRE.

RARELY has a long projected fête been so fortunate in weather and all other enchantments, as Lord Monthermer's first ball.—It was given on the Tuesday preceding Ascot races and Midsummer-day.—The atmosphere was cleared by a recent thunder-storm ;—and the guests were prepared for a night of pleasure by a grand and therefore dull party the preceding night at

the Duchess of Havering's, and a ball which was dull without being grand, at Lady Gosshawk's.—Nothing intervened worthy of notice;—nothing to fatigue even the most sensitive of the beauties of the day, previous to their appearance in Grosvenor Square.

By twelve o'clock that night, Lord Monthermer's rooms were filled with all that was fairest and noblest of fashion and the fashionables. The thrones and principalities of the *beau monde* shone forth in all their splendour;—the show of diamonds was brilliant beyond comparison, it was evidently a "collar day."—Princess Radzivil blazed like a favourite sultana,—Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson seemed determined to demonstrate that she could be an ornament to society by wearing a suit of rubies worthy to form a standard of comparison with the virtuous wife cited by Solomon; and the four fair little Miss Mitchells, who accompanied her in

white crape and pearls, kept nodding their little heads in a group, like a cluster of snow-drops on a windy day.

At the door, to assist Lord Monthermer in doing the honours of his house, stood the Duchess of Havering, exquisitely dressed, in high beauty and high spirits;—prepared to enjoy a fête, of which all devolved upon herself save trouble, expense, and the disgrace of failure; and those who had only a word or two to bestow on their host and his *associée* on entering, were full of interjections when, after making the tour of the magnificent drawing-rooms, they were obliged to pass once more in review, ere they proceeded down stairs to the temporary ball-room.

"Upon my soul, Monthermer, you've done wonders!" cried Lord Royston; "By Jove, there's not an ugly woman in the room!"

"Not von voman else but ver' beautiful!"—corrected the showy count by whom Royston was accompanied (who, though concealing his exclusion from the best female society under a pretence of detesting "*le monde*," was never known to miss a ball to which he could manage to procure access under screen of some fashionable son or brother of the hostess, united with him in friendship by the common ties of betting-stand, dice-box, or green-room.

"*C'est vraiment charmant votre bal—je vous en fais mon compliment!*—you have the rare tactics of to give de fête!"—he continued, addressing Monthermer, and receiving with ineffable grace the distant bow of the Duchess of Havering; who, though she had been manœuvred into a slight acquaintance with Flaszaski through her less slight acquaintance with his Melton friend, Lord Loxley, re-

garded him as *suspect et mauvaise compagnie.*—"One can see de presiding hand of de fairy in all de arrange. *Tout est à merveille !*"—

"I declare its almost as good as that fine ball Lady Wycombe gave last season to the French princes!" said Royston, who was far from renowned for good breeding.

"*A peu près?—Mais mon cher, tu ne vois donc par clair?—Où as-tu diné?—Qu'est ce qui te fait hasarder une bêtise pareille?*—Dere was no more compare between Lady Vicom ball and dis, dan between a Colombine of de *banliene* and de Elsler!—*Allons donc*!—Lady Vicom!"

The duchess was evidently pleased by this tribute to the fête given under her patronage; which, though not addressed to herself, was intended to be overheard.

"Come, come, Flaszaski,—that's no go!"—cried Royston. You know you abhor balls—you know you said t'other day at Crockford's—"

"*Mais mon cher, ce qui se dit chez Crock ne se répête pas ici. Fais moi l'amitié de ne pas te compromettre en citant devant des divinités les propos qui ne se sont addressés qu'aux hommes.*"

The duchess was enchanted. Disgusted like all the rest of her sex by the coarseness and slang adopted by a certain set of the lordlings of the day, the mild manners and *bon ton* of the count, filled her with pleasure and surprise. Aware that he frequented the most anathematized female society, she had prepared herself for manners tainted by the familiar forwardness so apt to characterize men habituated to degrading female associations; and little dreaming with how consummate an actor she had to deal,—little dreaming of Flaszaski's boast to his continental correspondents, that he had taken measure of the weaknesses of all the members of the English world of fashion,

and could fit them to a turn with their cap and bells,—she gradually admitted his advances, smiled upon his sallies, and at length condescended to reply. Before the close of the evening, she was seen entering the ball-room on the arm of the omnipotent victor.

"Your lordship must be overjoyed by the success of your ball?" said Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson to Lord Monthermer, as she passed in to supper. "I declare there isn't a person of any distinction in all London, but what's here!"

"You must be enchanted with the success of your ball," observed Lady Wycombe, in her turn;—"you have managed to keep away nearly all the objectionable people."

"You must be pleased with the success of your ball," said the Duchess of Kimbolton; "to do *you* honour, so many of us have

overlooked urgent motives for absenting ourselves."

"You must be so pleased with your ball, added Mary De Ligne, tripping after her chaperon—"I have met nothing but Northamptonshire friends since I came in!"

"You must be gratified by the success of your ball," said the odd man, creeping after them—"I never saw the light more equally distributed,—the arrangements are truly excellent."

"You *must* be satisfied with your ball," added Lord Carpynter. "Though there's the Poor Law Bill to-night before the House, you have no less than thirty-two members,—I have just told them."

"You must be delighted with your ball," said the Duke of Wexford. "I have given a glance at the supper-rooms.—Vastly well done, I assure you,—not overcharged like most

English suppers, which resemble a *magazin de comestibles* rather a buffet. I could not have imagined that any thing of the Williams or Williamson class could produce so well-conducted an affair."

"You must be content with your ball, I think?" said Lord Loxley. "Though so many people are off to-morrow for Ascot, (a large party, you know, at the Castle,) it has kept scarcely any one away!"

"Pleased with your ball?" said the impassive Sir Kenelm Hulme; "one of the best, I assure you, of the season."

"*Vous nous avez donné, mi lor, une fête délicieuse!*" cried Princess Radzivil. "*Cela doit vous faire plaisir! Quant à moi,—cela ne me rappelle que trop les beaux jours de notre malheureuse Varsovie.*" And the disconsolate princess sighed as heavily as the chains of diamonds

and emeralds tightening her *corsage* would permit.

"*Un bal superbe et qui fait honneur au bon goût de votre seigneurie,*" added the Marquis of Sennatea. "*En fait du comfortable, vive la vieille Angleterre!*"

"Satisfied with your ball, eh, Monthermer?" inquired the flippant Mr. Harford, sauntering in. "Not badly arranged, 'pon honour!—If one could but smell the roses instead of the oil-cloth in the temporary conservatory, it might be an improvement. The *coup d'œil* reminds me of the Tompkins's celebrated flare-up at Naples."

Such was the running fire of compliments aimed at the noble host; yet notwithstanding these tokens of sympathy from an indulgent public, Lord Monthermer was neither gratified, satisfied, nor content. His fête was brilliant.

He had no fault to find with the decorations. He had no objection to raise against the arrangements; nay, he might have done honour to the exceeding fairness of the lovely groups smiling and fluttering around him,—if they had happened to attract his notice. But he saw nothing but a blaze of light,—he heard nothing but the murmur of many voices; even the cracking of all the whips in the quadrille from the Postillon failed to startle him from his reverie. When Lady Adelaide de Vere passed beside him on the arm of a royal highness, he scarcely noted the captivating smile which she directed towards her all but affianced lover.

For Lord Monthermer's ball day had been a day of anguish!—In kindness to the "thing of the Williams or Williamson class," who presided over his kitchen, Lord Monthermer had

purposed dining at his club on the day of the ball; but, having called in Arlington Street on his way towards Pall Mall, on some trifling bouquet-bearing errand such as lovers devise twenty times a day as a plea for obtaining a glimpse of the one loved face, Lord Colebrooke insisted on his sitting down with them *sans cérémonie* to their family dinner.

Now a family dinner in certain houses, is a denunciation which conveys threats of a bevy of school-room misses primly posted round the table; a fat loin of mutton at one end,—an unctuous Scotch salmon, hid in a parsley bed, at the other,—and a vast tureen of pepper and water smoking in the centre, flanked with strong brocoli and weak melted butter. But the family dinner of Lord Colebrooke, with its fascinating lady-president, and fascinating *petits plats*, its small talk and

small claret, was a thing of very different caliber; and Monthermer jumped at the proposal much as a Tory out of place would jump at the chancellorship of the exchequer. It vexed him to observe how coldly the invitation was seconded by Lady Adelaide; still more when, after a few minutes' pause, a knock was heard at the door,—the scuffle of chairmen's feet in the hall,—the wheeze of a panting dowager on the stairs,—and, finally, the announcement of the "Countess of Phalaris" in the drawing-room!—The Countess Dowager of Phalaris!—

"What business had she there at such a time?"

Still, with a lover's infatuation, it was easy to attribute his Adelaide's invitation to the old lady at a moment there was every reason to conclude him engaged elsewhere, to the desire of avoiding giving him pain. She had avowed her determination of adhering to the old friend of her mother; and it was, perhaps, an act of

kindness and deference to persevere in her attentions in the manner least likely to annoy his feelings. This fact once established, Lord Monthermer relaxed from his momentary uneasiness; and, by laughing heartily at one or two of the lively sallies of the old lady, tried to prove to Lady Adelaide de Vere that he was not very unforgiving!

He had better have held his peace. Lady Phalaris, relieved by his unexpected hilarity from the restraint she had hitherto imposed upon herself in the presence of one whom she regarded as a prude,—a *bégueul*,—a country baronet,—began, after her third glass of claret to render her *double entente* almost single, and to call things by their right names whenever the right names were wrong; till Lord Monthermer blushed for her, for himself, and for the hosts who had brought them together.

It was in vain that Lady Adelaide tried to

silence her, for she was *en verve*, full of reminiscences shared by Lord Colebrooke, and anecdotes that appeared only too amusing to his daughter. It was impossible to deny the piquancy of the dowager's wit; but it was the piquancy of a bramble, not of a rose. There was poison in the sting, as in that of the meanest insect; or rather,—as in the viper tribes,—the peril of the venom was great in proportion to the littleness of the reptile.

Conscious of a feeling towards the offender such as he had never before entertained towards a being wearing the female form, Lord Monthermer was at no pains to conceal his contempt and abhorrence. He could have found it in his heart to hint to the old offender that she had lived too long; to tell the hateful epicæne that

A shameless woman is the worst of men.

He was almost beside himself with disgust!

In compassion to his manifest irritation, Lady Adelaide proposed to her companion to quit the dessert table long before the countess dowager was prepared for departure; and Monthermer made up his mind to loiter with Lord Colebrooke over his claret, till he should hear the chairmen re-enter the hall to carry off their sinful charge. To absent himself voluntarily from the side of Lady Adelaide, was now, however, becoming an effort beyond his powers; and, suddenly withdrawing from the table where his future father-in-law sat nodding in his chair, with a nod which, unlike that of "Jove in his chair," kept in awe neither gods nor men, he betook himself to the drawing-room. No bell had been rung,—no coffee was announced;—but, assuming the right of his familiar footing in the house, he stole unnoticed into the presence of its liege lady.

She had retreated, apparently, to her bou-

doir overlooking the park; for as Monthermer paused at the table, to examine the last new graphic epigrams of H. B., he overheard the voice of Lady Phalaris remarking,—

"I am convinced you would be a miserable woman. There is no happiness in this world without fitness of things. The last century and the present go on smoothly because one follows the other—but they would never do to run together.—I tell you my dear child, you would be wretched."

"Have you made the enquiries I begged you to make?" was Lady Adelaide's subdued reply.

"I have my dear,—and found my original information quite correct.—He has a clear eighty thousand per annum."

Referring this to himself, Monthermer could not forbear smiling at her exaggeration; for even Messrs. Cognovit had never undertaken

to screw up his income to more than forty seven thousand five hundred.

"I really think we might be very happy together,"—sighed Lady Adelaide (and Monthermer scarcely knew which to prize most highly,—the sentiment or the sigh). "A person of accommodating character is the pleasantest of companions in so long a journey as that of matrimony."

"He certainly *has* an excellent temper,"—said the dowager. "I fancy you might mould him to what you please!"

"*Quant à cela*"—replied his future bride, "the things that please *me* please *him*.—Our tastes and habits are pretty similar, and his uncle's noble fortune will enable us to indulge them. I am sure we should be happy!"—And the sentiment was duly echoed by the listening lover, who fancied he was disproving the proverb concerning listeners.

"There *was* a time," resumed Lady Adelaide, "when I fancied I should prefer a man of stronger character,—a man more advanced and experienced in life. But the delusion is over; and I have all but made up my mind to become his wife!"

"You shall have *my* consent and blessing!" cried Lady Phalaris—yet adding with singular inconsistency,—"But I confess I have no patience with the prudery of Lord Monthermer!"

"I must say he makes himself exceedingly ridiculous at times,"—was the concluding phrase of Lady Adelaide.

Such was the conversation which had alternately perplexed and soothed the ear of the ball-giver of Grosvenor Square. He felt that he ought not to have overheard so much;—he felt that on finding himself so near the boudoir, he should have given intimation of his proximity. He felt ashamed of himself, and not

altogether satisfied with the moderate defence of his character undertaken during his absence by Lady Adelaide.

Such were the motives which clouded his brow with care, while accepting the adulation of the five hundred particular friends assembled at his ball!

CHAPTER VI.

Une morale nue apporte toujours l'ennui.
Le conte (Comte?) fait passer le précepte avec lui!

LA FONTAINE.

On a tant célébré Grammont,
Son esprit, sa gaité, ses graces!
Il renait en toi!—Tu remplaces
Le héros de St. Evremont.

BOUFFLERS.

THE day following the ball, the morning papers did full justice to the splendours of Lord Monthermer's entertainment, as well as to the two pounds two shillings paid to each by the

worshipful Mr. Gossage, for the insertion of his first essay in descriptive prose;—prose which N. P. Willis might have envied, and which the envious Sapphic could scarcely have surpassed.

But not one of these small historians deigned to notice that, after the departure of the last man among his guests (in the person of old young Minchem, who always pretends to be looking under benches for a lost hat as a pretext for another and yet another last glass of iced Champagne), his lordship retired to bed with an overwhelming headach, only to rise in the morning with a scarcely less overpowering heart-ach. For bad company like bad wine is followed by nausea; and Monthermer's first thought in waking, was disgust against profligate old women.

What could be the meaning of the allusions

of Lady Phalaris?—What right had she to sit in judgment upon him?—nay, what right had even Lady Adelaide to refer to a person avowedly hateful to his feelings, that which ought to remain sacred between themselves?

Notwithstanding the gentle sentiments by which her offence was qualified, Monthermer was deeply piqued. He even determined to abstain from paying his customary morning devoirs in Arlington Street, and being engaged to a bachelor dinner with Flaszaski, there was no fear of their meeting till the midnight throng of Almack's brought them into collision.

For the count, (though he had intruded at Monthermer's breakfast-table, with a view of spying not into the nakedness but the vesture of the land wherever a grand ball was preparing,) was far above the dirty delinquency of spunging.

He never accepted a quail in the way of hospitality, without returning it with a *poularde truffée*; and those who gave him humble port were sure to receive Imperial Tokay. The only question was the *source* of the *poularde* and *origin* of the tokay?—It was clear that they were not had for money,—however they might be bestowed by love.

Meanwhile Lord Monthermer repaired, in his worst humour, to the humming-birds' nest of the dainty count, his head running on mischievous dowagers and calculating beauties; but, so happy was the influence of its exquisite distribution and recondite dandyism, that, after chatting a quarter of an hour before dinner with Kerr and Strangways, Sir Walter Willets, the Duke of Wexford, and two exceedingly well-bred, entertaining Frenchmen whose names he could not catch, the injured man's

irritability became subdued to a more philanthropic mood of mind.

Flaszaski's dinners, always celebrated for their *recherche*, were excelled in this miniature banquet. Besides the usual charm of two classical and two experimental entrées, there were cold *hors-d'œuvres* from St. Petersburg, new to every one present, and *hors-d'œuvres sucrés*, invented by the confectioner of His Holiness, hitherto untasted beyond the frontiers of the papal states. The Duke of Wexford was in a mingled frenzy of jealousy and enjoyment; till, on the appearance of a *fondu à la Valençay*, the particular *point fromager* of which was at present a mystery even to the count, his grace fairly gave in; and admitted Flaszaski to be the *véritable Amphitryon*—and himself a pretender. The Jupiter of London gastronomy avowed himself wholly defeated!—

Lord Monthermer cared little about the

novelties at table;—little about the adornments of the *maisonnette* in which it was spread;—little about the wisdom of the two politicians, or wit of the two Parisians. Yet all these united, exercised an exquisite influence. Rarely had he enjoyed so pleasant a dinner-party;—in a bachelor establishment,—never. The *laisser aller* of the thing delighted him. He began to fancy that bachelorhood was by no means so deplorable a condition; and though the luxurious refinements affected by Flaszaski might be blameable in a man the interest of whose debts amounted to some thousands a year, while the interest of his fortune, (dissipated ten years before,) amounted only to a few hundreds,—in the lord of Bridgnorth Castle, they would be appropriate enough. That which was vice in the one, became virtue in the other.

The little party grew gayer and gayer,—

more sociable and more sociable. Temperance and soberness are admirable things;—less admirable in Lord Monthermer than in most men,—his appetites, like those affected by Shakspeare's Angelo, being scarcely more to bread than stone, and his blood, like that superficial worthy's, "snow-broth."

But to dine out with a pleasant party at a moment when the inclination uppermost in his mind was to get rid of his uneasy contemplations, was a trying strait; and it must be confessed that if his lordship threw off for a time all memory of his old plague and his young one, it was at the expense of some portion of his wonted gravity. He was elated,—nothing more! He was disqualified to judge of men and things,—still more of women and things,—with his usual scrutinizing judgment; and when, accompanied by Count Achille de Redorte and

Count Amédée de Mondyon, he entered the ball-room at Almack's at one o'clock in the morning, and found Lady Adelaide de Vere waltzing with Dick Harford, it was but natural that, seeing through her project of exciting his jealousy, he should treat it with deserved contempt. Mr. Harford, indeed!—As if any man in his senses could be jealous of such a thing as Mr. Harford!—

Lady Wycombe, who happened to notice his somewhat unsteady *entrée*, and the unmeaning laugh which marked his recognition of the projects of Lady Adelaide, took the opportunity to receive him with peculiar distinction. There is usually a woman or some other spirit of mischief at hand, to profit by our frailties and found their strength upon our weakness; and Lady Wycombe, though too well bred to create a dissension likely to make an *éclat*,—that de-

light of the vulgar, and antipathy of the fine,—was by no means disinclined to stir up the waters of strife, provided they were *à la rose* or *à la fleur d'orange*. She loved a little piece of *tracasserie*, not too considerable to be whispered over in boudoirs and negotiated in satin-paper notes. There is a species of miniature diplomacy, whose contracts cannot be writ on parchment, or whose causes pleaded in courts, which exceeds in importance to the fashionable, all that vice-chancellor ever entangled within the meshes of the law, or chancellor to set at liberty again.

"So our friend Lord Portumna does not return to Naples," said Lady Wycombe, addressing herself to Lord Monthermer. "I foresaw by what fell from him on our journey home, that he would not return. All parties are better suited as matters stand now. Sir Raymond is the very man for Naples;—our

affairs will be quite safe in the hands of Sir Raymond and the Duchess d'Ascoli. I had a letter to-day from Bagot—I—I mean from Mrs. St. Paul,—who tells me every one is delighted with the change."

"Lord Portumna was too inert for the Neapolitans. They come so little forward themselves, that they require ambassadors *qui font des frais* in the way both of conversation and hospitality."

"Excellently distinguished! I quite agree with you; and our friend, Sir Raymond will make *des frais*, and not at the expense of other people. Besides, the arrangement exactly suits Lady Adelaide. It is a very convenient thing to have an uncle Foreign Secretary."

"Lady Adelaide? What interest has Lady Adelaide de Vere in Lord Portumna's appointment?—They do not see each other once a week!"—

"I thought you were aware of Mr Harford's appointment?"

"Certainly. He accompanies Lord Portumna to St. Petersburg.—But what signifies *that* to Lady Adelaide de Vere?—Do you imagine," said Monthermer, directing a sarcastic glance towards the dancers, "that her ladyship cannot dispense with such a partner as Mr. Harford?"

"It would all do very well for the present."

"*What* would do very well?" inquired Lord Monthermer, fancying himself misled by the silver whispers uttered by the low-voiced exclusive.

"Oh! I beg your pardon—I see we do not understand each other! I thought that—I really fancied—but I beg you ten thousand pardons—*Bon soir, princesse!—Mais qu'avez vous donc?—vous avez l'air toute abattue!*"

cried she, taking Princess Radzivil by both hands and leading her off to a sofa, where a *chuchottage* ensued between the two fine ladies which it was politely impossible to interrupt.

One only resource remained for Lord Monthermer. He felt it incumbent on him, irritated as he was by all he heard and saw, to inflict some sort of punishment on Lady Adelaide; and not having sufficient command over his feelings to torment her by coolness and indifference,—it remained only to provoke her into jealousy. There were two hundred ladies present ready to become his abettors in such a conspiracy; but he knew that it would point his arrow sharpest to obtain a confederate in Mary De Ligne.

"Will you dance with me?" said he, in the familiar tone now established between them in

spite of the remonstrances it provoked from the Duchess of Kimbolton.

"Dance with you?—With pleasure!—They are going to give '*Le Domino noir*' and I was dying to stand up."

And in a few minutes, they were dancing together;— Mary, in her usual happy spirits, and Lord Monthermer, in forced ones arising from envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness.

"I have something to tell you extremely amusing," said Miss De Ligne. "Some one has written word into Northamptonshire that you and I are going to be married!—Can you conceive any thing more ridiculous?—The Duchess was very angry with me for laughing about it, and would be shocked to death at my mentioning it to *you*. So pray do not tell her. Only I could not help wishing to divert you as

much as I have been diverted myself. It seems so strange to our Northamptonshire neighbours that you and I should both be amusing ourselves in gay, giddy London, that almost without intending it, they have begun to couple our names together !—"

"They do us much honour by troubling themselves about us !" said Monthermer, somewhat embarrassed by the candour of the guileless girl.

"Think how astonished Harry and Maysey would be to hear me called their little mamma !" cried she. Then, angry with herself on perceiving upon the brow of Lord Monthermer gathering clouds, which she attributed to this faint allusion to the memory of Marcella, she could not help adding,—"But they are fortunate that the name of mother will never be spoken before them in jest !—"

Monthermer would gladly have thrown off the sadness which Mary's words had called into his countenance, for he was anxious that Lady Adelaide should see him gay and gracious in the company of Miss De Ligne. But it might not be. The spell was cast otherwise. Mary's sortie had effectually silenced him; and all he could do, in pursuance of his plots, was to attach himself to the Duchess of Kimbolton's side after restoring his little partner to the colossal arm of her chaperon.

The duchess welcomed her recreant knight in high good humour. She had noticed him in colloquy with Lady Wycombe; she had observed the coolness between him and Lady Adelaide; she rejoiced to find him once more engage in familiar intercourse with Mary. But had Lord Monthermer's views in this renewal been such as she trusted, her bad ma-

nagement must have defeated them. She set about making the agreeable to him; and the Duchess of Kimbolton's mode of being agreeable was as overpowering as an avalanche. She began prosing and prosing with a weight of elocution heavy enough to have flattened a tortoise. It is difficult to conceive a human being talking so much yet saying so little.

There was in fact, more pith and argument in the six words uttered just then *en passant* by Lord Portumna to Lady Adelaide de Vere, than in the six thousand strung together by her grace. For with an involuntary glance towards Lord Monthermer, and a voluntary bow of dismissal to the partner with whom for three hours past she had been flirting, her ladyship, in obedience to his lordship's commands, turned towards the sofa where, by the side of the Duchess of Havering, there remained a place

unoccupied, and quitted it no more throughout the evening.

The brief phrase whispered to her by the new ambassador to the not very ancient Court of St. Petersburg, had passed unmarked by Lord Monthermer.—Not so the movement by which it was followed. He saw Lady Adelaide dismiss the stripling whose attentions she had been enduring, and place herself soberly beside her aunt; and being now accustomed to follow the admiring glances attendant on that lovely being as shadow upon substance, he soon found himself edging his way towards her. It was not his intention to address her; but the smile with which she invited him towards the sofa proved as irresistible as ever.

Having obeyed her silent summons Lord Monthermer found himself reluctantly convinced that he owed her a thousand apologies

for not having escorted her to her carriage from his ball the preceding night, — for not having proposed to escort her in her ride that morning;—for having presumed to dine with such a person as Count Flaszaski, and for having presumed to dance with such a person as Miss Mary De Ligne! — He had not a word to offer in his own defence; for all allusion to the conversation involuntarily overheard between her and Lady Phalaris, was impossible. He submitted therefore in silence and humility. Having consented to join the duchess and herself the following day to proceed together to a strawberry party at Lady Glenvillian's, at Campden Hill, all that now remained was to conduct them to the carriage; and Lord Monthermer might perchance have retired for the night to sleep away Flaszaski's claret without one disagreeable recurrence, had

he not in quitting the ball-room at Almack's, encountered the keen eye of Lady Wycombe, fixed in contemptuous pity on his face.—He saw and understood the inference.

CHAPTER VII.

Oui, je voudrais qu'aucun ne vous trouvât aimable,
Que vous fussiez réduite à un sort misérable,
Que le ciel en naissant ne vous eût donné rien,
Que vous n'eussiez ni rang, ni naissance, ni bien ;
Afin que de mon cœur l'éclatant sacrifice
Vous pût d'un pareil sort réparer l'injustice,
Et que j'eusse la joie et la gloire en ce jour
De vous voir tenir tout des mains de mon amour !

MOLIERE.

LADY GLENVILLIAN'S strawberry parties were pleasant, unceremonious affairs; superior to the glaring distinctions of the *déjeúner dansant* or *fête champêtre*. No military band

clashed its cymbals on the lawn; no marquees interposed their gay stripes among the green thickets. But every Thursday in the months of June and July, the particularly *beau* portion of the *beau monde* had liberty to stroll in her ladyship's beautiful gardens, and refresh themselves with a collation laid out in the house. The privilege rarely collected together more than sixty or seventy persons; but it was a seventy of which one thirty-five received sufficient gratification in an opportunity of meeting the other.

Few breakfasts of the season rivalled in *recherche* these unpretending parties of Lady Glenvillian. People repaired to Campden Hill to enjoy verdure and fresh air, more than to exhibit new bonnets or criticise those of their friends; and as nothing was announced in the way of display, of course no one was disappointed. Lord Monthermer anticipated a su-

premely happy day when he took his seat in the open carriage of the Duchess of Havering; and, if thwarted in his expectations, the fault lay neither with the strawberries and cream—nor with the roses and lilies! of Lady Glenvillian.

It is a delicious thing to take one's place in a well-appointed britszka, in a glorious day in June, opposite to the lady of one's thoughts! But the pleasure, great as it is, may be deteriorated by a scorching sun, which necessitates the interposition of a parasol between our glances and the fair face we love to look on; placing us in peril every time the jolts of the carriage bring the spokes of the parasol into our eyes.

Just such was Lord Monthermer's position as they drove through the parks to Campden Hill; and scarcely was he released from his panic, scarcely had they alighted at the door

of the villa, when Lady Adelaide's arm was ppropriated by Lord De Bathe, the long-footed, short-legged, broad-faced son and heir of Lady Chertsey,—a man who contrived to render himself detestable to every soul in London by intruding his well-intended civilities at the wrong time and place. She shrugged her shoulders, indeed, towards Lord Monthermer in token of her disappointment, as they entered the garden together. But he felt persuaded that she, so cool, so commanding, might have prevented had she wished it the intrusion of Lord De Bathe;—he felt that he ought not to have been turned over to the Duchess of Havering for the rest of the day. Luckily, the duchess was a well-bred, easy, talkative person, whose society under such circumstances was as little of an infliction as could be supposed; still, at every turn, as they paused to admire some beautiful flower, or chat

with some beautiful woman, he had the mortification of discerning the lovely face which had attracted him to Campden Hill turned towards another,—the matchless form, whose every movement was grace, progressing onwards out of sight, by the side of the parallelogrammatic figure of the wooden Lord De Bathe.

Even the duchess's conversation, which he could have made agreeable to himself by turning it upon Lady Adelaide, was engrossed by the numerous young men crowding to her grace's side. Though neither young nor beautiful in the eyes of any one save Lord Loxley, (who, having found her young and beautiful twenty years before, had been too much engrossed ever since by his training stables and stud, by Newmarket and Melton, to discover any subsequent change,) the Duchess of Havering's social position was such as to render her

at all times, the centre of a circle. Mondyon and Redorte,—Flaszaski's amusing friends,—soon attached themselves exclusively to her side; two ugly, mean-looking men, whose lively manners and sallies of pleasantry threw completely into the shade the fine person and formal good sense of the English peer.

"*Mais comment donc,*—how is it that you are not at Ascot?"—said the duchess, addressing her foreign friends. "*I* being no sports-woman go for a single day.—But all our beaux you see have deserted us this morning for the course.—*Ces messieurs ne peuvent se refuser un seul jour!*"

"*J'en ai eu bien assez de vos courses d'Epsome!*"—replied Mondyon.—"Why travel so far in the dust, to look at a pack of horses running at a rate of speed that serves no purpose of utility?"

"*Quant à moi,*" added his friend,—"*je ne*

raffole pas de chevaux,—j'ai la hardiesse de préférer le genre humain!"

"*Et que voit-on dans ce bas monde qu'une vaste écurie?—On y trouve tant d'animaux!*"—exclaimed Mondyon.

"*Cependant tout ce qui se respecte un peu doit visiter les courses d'Ascot,*"—interrupted the duchess; and she adroitly turned the conversation upon the races and favourite horses, hoping to afford Lord Monthermer an opportunity of joining them. He was however insensible to her efforts in his favour. As she had others to entertain her, he took an Englishman's privilege of being silent, absent, cold, and reserved, and of turning his whole attention to the comings and goings of Lady Adelaide; till Count Amédée and his friend, who had seen him so lively at Flaszaski's dinner under the influence of Champagne, set him down as one of *ces grand génies de la Grande Bretagne,* who

know how to address themselves to dogs, horses, grooms, and parliament, but have not a word to throw at a woman deserving a woman's ear.

Superficial observers!—Within the bosom of that apparently phlegmatic Englishman, burned a flame from which eloquence and inspiration might have kindled a thousand torches;—while in their own united, there was scarcely warmth for kindling a dainty taper to seal a billet-doux or inspire the airy nothings contained in its satin envelope.

"What do you think of our London villas?"—inquired the duchess of the two Parisians, who were recently arrived in England.—"This is a pretty toy of Lady Glenvillian's?"—

"Charming!"—was the frank rejoinder of both. "We have nothing comparable with it. It is a style in which we have every thing to

learn. *Our* villas are mere city-houses, stuck into gardens;—gardens too, where the roses and hyacinths are scarcely a border's breadth removed from the lettuces and spinach.—We possess to-day as we did fifty years ago, only one villa deserving the name,—the Petit Trianon,—now out of favour and repair."

"No *private* villas?—Nothing in the style of Chiswick, or Rose Bank?"

"Not one. But there are houses in the Faubourg St. Germain and St. Honoré, which boast of beautiful gardens, and might be almost termed villas."

"But at a greater distance, have you nothing in the style of Sion or Moor Park?"

"The caliber of our fortunes does not admit of it.—A handsome hotel in Paris, and a barrack of a chateau on some remote estate, form the utmost to be compassed by the six or eight thousand a year which *we* consider a princely

fortune. One or two bankers have tolerable country houses at a stone's throw from Paris; —but all competition with England on such points, is out of the question."

"Nor have we the well trained establishments necessary to the refinement observable here in every department,"— observed Redorte. — "Your households are admirably appointed! — What order — what regularity —what completeness!—Yet such is the influence of our ragged habits of life, that we Parisians, while rendering justice to such clockwork administration, cannot help feeling that royalty alone is destined by the dispensation of Providence to the *ennuis* arising from so much needless pomp and ceremony!"

"National habits are of course imperceptible to natives,"—said the duchess, good-humouredly. "It never appears to me at Havering House that I could dispense with the services

of the smallest iota of housemaid or gardener, without being sensible of the loss.—In France, a fourth part of the same household would suffice."

"An eighth:—but you must not expect to see things done with the deferential exactitude practised in England. French servants go through their duties in the way and at the hours which suit them. They do their *possible* to satisfy the exactions of their employers. But the English do more;—the English do *l'impossible*,—servile to their masters as they are insolent among themselves.—Your London footman, if ordered to deliver a message to the evil one in person, instead of hazarding a reply, would proceed doggedly to the attempt:—your Paris lackey would make florid protestations of his desire to give satisfaction by the effort, but without stirring a step.—*Ah! Madame la Duchesse!*—Paris is lost as regards a household.—

The guillotine, in suppressing the aristocracy, destroyed also the valetocracy!—*On a dit que les dieux s'en vont!—croyez moi les valets de chambre ne nous restent guères!*"

Monthermer, irritated by the leisurely pace at which they were strolling through the shrubberies, while Lady Adelaide and Lord De Bathe unchecked by conversation proceeded onwards and were out of sight, began to find all this prattle about butlers and housekeepers, exceedingly trivial. — Unskilled, however, in he art of giving a new turn to the conversation, he resigned himself to hear and to bear; when fortunately, Lady Sudford, who was just arrived, flew up to them in one of those paroxysms of unmeaning vivacity with which fine ladies love to monster the nothings of their daily life.

"My dear duchess!—here you are at last!—If I had not been a wise little woman, I might

have still been sitting waiting for you in Curzon Street."

"*Waiting for me?*"—

"You promised to call for me."

"This is the first I have heard of it."

"Shocking, shocking!—Don't you recollect that I caught hold of your hand last night as you were passing the quadrille I was dancing with Sir Walter Willets,—and told you that you *must* come for me to-day,—that there were no horses to be had, on account of Ascot?"—

"But I never said, yes?"

"Oh! indeed you *did*."

"I told you I was to bring Adelaide."

"And I answered that you must also bring *me*. So you see if I had relied upon you, I should have lost this delicious day—and my strawberries and cream. But I persuaded Lady Phalaris to bring me. She had no thoughts of

coming,—but I wrote and insisted; and there she is, poor old dear, in the conservatory, shivering in white muslin and blue ribands, like a superannuated zephyr or the month of May in a fit of the *grippe!*—Do you go to Ascot to-morrow?—You have not the least possible bit of a place for me, have you?—Sudford is so illnatured!—He has taken Willets, Colonel Bagot, and that horrid old Hulme, in his phaeton; and when I asked for a place, actually told me there was nothing left but a corner of the ice-tub, where I might niche myself in with the Champagne."

"*My* party is made up,"—replied the duchess, too much accustomed to the forwardness of her giddy niece-in-law, to feel any scruple in rebutting it.

"So is my mind!"—cried the little lady, waving the long streamers of clematis, adorning her *paille de ris*.—"To Ascot, go I *must*; and

if no one else will take me, I shall accept Lord Royston's offer of a seat in his Pelham."

"You and Sudford must settle that between you—My dear Lady Wycombe, how do you do?—I hope you received the second volume of Maussion's book?—I desired my page to bring back word at what hour you were coming here,—but could get no answer.—What a lovely day!"

"Beautiful."—And they began conversing together in whispers which Monthermer would not have understood if he had heard; and which, could he have heard, were scarce worth the trouble of understanding. All this time, Adelaide was probably walking and talking with the superannuated zephyr;—and the whispers of Lady Phalaris were even more worthless than those of his two companions!—But what was to be done?—A man who has been accepted as a walking-stick, must bear his

faculties meekly till he receive a bouquet d'adieu.—It depended upon the Duchess of Havering's mercy whether or not Lord Monthermer was to be kept dawdling by her side for the rest of the day.

The worst of his ordeal consisted in a suspicion that the smile occasionally directed towards him by Lady Wycombe, purported to imply her suspicions of the torments he was enduring. He had not forgotten her malice of the preceding night, or the oracular mystery with which she had endeavoured to perplex him. He was now too fully initiated into the arcana of fashion, to experience surprise at the gracious intimacy subsisting between two ladies loving each other much as Elizabeth of England regarded her loving cousin Mary of Scots. But as we see at fairs cats and canary-birds trained to live in domestic union, there was nothing absolutely miraculous

in the conservative queen holding one end of an olive-branch, while the other was grasped by the liberal lady of the foreign affairs. But if the Duchess of Havering could be in charity with Lady Wycombe, *he* could *not*; and it was a blessed release when, having reached a seat embowered with Boursault and Noisette roses calculated on the narrowest scale to admit a tête-à-tête, the rival queens monopolized it together, and honoured him with his congé.

Lady Glenvillian's grounds were not extensive; a large melon frame might have converted them into a *jardin d'hiver*, rivalling that of St. Petersburg. Still, it seemed a difficult matter to discover Lady Adelaide. Lord De Bathe whom he met (attached to the side of Miss Baddeley whose flirtation with Sir Walter Willets, he was as usual interrupting) informed him that Lady Adelaide was tired, and gone to rest herself in the house; but in the house he

found only the servants arranging the refreshment tables,—St. Leger Kerr asleep in an easy chair, dreaming of the speech he had inflicted the preceding night on the house,—and Lady Margaret Baddeley pretending to read "Wilberforce's Memoirs," behind which she was grimacing in all the torture of a tight shoe, which Mr. Puncheon of Devonshire Square would have called a *cornucopia*. Not a sign of Lady Adelaide!

At length, sounds of unmeaning merriment issuing from a cool little book-room, reminded him that there was a Lady Sudford in the world; and having, as he anticipated, detected the little frivolous brunette in a flirtation as deep with her new acquaintance Mondyon as if they had been intimate for years, he hazarded an inquiry after her sister-in-law.

"Adelaide?—you want to find Adelaide?" she

reiterated, recalled by Monthermer's anxious countenance to the recollection of his claims on the family.—" I'm sure I can't assist you.—How came you to let her escape?—I thought you never lost sight of her?—Nay, you need not look so horribly jealous!—There is nothing to alarm you.—The last time I saw her, she was in close confab with—guess?—an old woman!—I left her in the vine walk, hobbling to suit the pace of poor Lady Phalaris!"

Had the lord of the Bridgnorth stud possessed just then the control over so much as a broken down hack, to carry him back to town, he would have taken his departure *sans adieu* to either the duchess or her niece. But he was dependent on them for the means of conveyance. He could not set off on foot, in the sun and dust, under fire of a battery of sneers from the knights of the rainbow who were brandishing

their canes round Lady Glenvillian's gates;—but lo, as he stood fuming under the awning fronting the lawn, it was at least some comfort to meet with sympathy in his ill-humour from the Duke of Wexford; who, with a slight threatening of the gout had abstained from Ascot, and been persuaded by St. Leger Kerr to drive with him so far as Campden Hill.

"What a detestable invention are these strawberry parties!" said he, gravely addressing Lord Monthermer. "The only *déjeûners* that ought to tempt a man in his senses out of his usual habits, are Lord Hertford's, where one is sure of one's turtle and venison. But the absurdity of trifling with the appetite by tongue and chicken at six o'clock when one dines at eight, is really too contemptible."

"But why eat tongue or chicken?—why not confine oneself to the object of the entertainment,—strawberries and cream?" said Mon-

thermer, too hot and too cross for any thing but contradiction.

"*Strawberries and cream?*" ejaculated the duke, with a countenance expressive of as much horror as if his companion had proposed to his digestion a box of Morrison's Pills. "Do you suppose there exists an individual beyond the age of the preparatory school, capable of swallowing such a *mélange* as strawberries and cream?—Good God! my dear Lord Monthermer,—your stomach would not recover such a shock for the next six days!—I wish you had seen the Comte de Mondyon's face when Lady Sudford just now offered him a mess of that description.—'*Pourquoi faire?*'—cried he. He could not bring himself to fancy that it was intended for the food of man!"

"I know no better way of eating strawberries," said Monthermer, calmly.

"The only mode I am acquainted with of

eating strawberries," observed the duke, knitting his brows and looking serious, "is to sprinkle them slightly with powdered white sugarcandy and half a spoonful of Malmsey, and take them immediately after your plain cream or biscuit ice, after dinner;—(not *with* the ice,—*that* is ruin to the flavour!)—A plate of Myatt's strawberries perfectly ripe and without sugar, is no bad thing at a ball, for persons who do not sup; or in a very hot July, when a *déjeûner à la fourchette* is not always possible, one may hazard a little fruit even at breakfast. But in this unfortunate climate, few productions of the earth will bear being attempted in a state of crudity! Even pine-apple, in *my* opinion, is best as a flavour, or *en compôte*;—for my part I should just as soon think of eating a raw turnip as raw pine-apple.

Lord Monthermer, perceiving that these opinions were delivered with a degree of ear-

nestness to have done honour to the lecture-room of the Royal Institution, was careful not to avow himself partial to a New Providence in a state of nature, a confession which he saw would reduce him in Wexford's estimation to the level of an Anthropophagus. He remarked only that, in southern climates, fruit was an inevitable diet. "My friends the Neapolitans, for instance," he observed, "would be burnt with fevers, were it not for their figs and water-melons."

"I never can bear to think of Naples!—What a country to live in!"—said the duke, raising his hands and eyes with pity.—"Obliged to invent that horrible diet of maccaroni, to subdue the system to the atmosphere!—Rely upon it, my dear Monthermer, Paris is the most southern point at which a man who values his happiness, ought to hazard a residence. Paris is the *juste milieu* of gastronomy.

The climate, though such as to justify a salad,—hock,—even fruit in a tolerable summer, never depresses the appetite below the level of a good *salmi* or *sauté*. I conceive Paris to be indebted to its felicitous locality for all its gastronomic pre-eminence.—This has not been sufficiently studied.—All that Montesquieu effected for the philosophy of jurisprudence by *L'esprit des Loix*, is yet to be done for gastronomy. Brillat Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière are at best but clever triflers: they have not penetrated into the subject with the research and gravity it deserves. Ah! here comes that splendid creature Lady Adelaide de Vere!"—cried the duke, interrupting himself; and to Lord Monthermer's great surprise, he saw Lady Adelaide advance deliberately towards them from the gardens, alone, and evidently in search of him.

"I almost feared you were gone away?"—

said she, after having graciously acknowledged the profound bow of the Duke of Wexford;—"As they will soon be going in to breakfast and I do not intend to be turned over a second time to Lord De Bathe, I am come in search of you, that we may sit together unless you are otherwise engaged."

Lord Monthermer bowed his acceptance, perplexed whether to bow or smile.

"I have been talking to poor Lady Phalaris," —she resumed.—"My sister Sudford has induced the old lady to come hither in defiance of rheumatism; I have been persuading her to hasten home again.—I am sure the duchess will take Emily home, rather than see the poor old lady so miserably out of place."

This was enough!—Lord Monthermer decided in favour of the smile.—The candour with which she alluded to her interview with Lady Phalaris, removed all uneasiness from his mind

There could be no mischief where there was no concealment.

"Shall we take a turn in the cedar-walk, till breakfast is announced?"—said he, offering her his arm; and the moment it was accepted leading her out of hearing of the duke. "You have made me very happy!" he continued, on finding himself alone with her. "I fancied you had made up your mind to render this day a day of penance to me."

"Penance to *you*?"—reiterated the silver tones of Lady Adelaide.—"And *why* should I desire to inflict pain upon you?—Are you not here at my express entreaty?—Should I have begged you to accompany us, but for the pleasure I find in your society?"

"Then why avoid me and transfer the happiness of your company to such a log as De Bathe—such a—"

"Nay,"—interrupted Lady Adelaide, "surely

some concession is due to the decencies of life?—Could I refuse Lord De Bathe's arm and tell him I preferred that of Lord Monthermer?—Or would you have had me mortify my poor old friend Lady Phalaris by owning I had promised you to break off all further connexion with her?"

"Certainly not!—I know that I am selfish—I know that I am exacting—I know that I am wrong—foolish—miserable—weak!—But I have a right to entreat that you will pity and bear with me, dearest Lady Adelaide, so long as it is your pleasure to prolong my state of probation!"

"I *do* bear with you—or I should not have quitted my cool shady vinewalk, to traverse yonder glaring lawn in search of you. But *pity* you I really cannot. Never did I behold a person less deserving compassion!—I consider you the happiest man in London!"

"It is in your power to *make* me so."

"Not more in my power than my inclination," responded Lady Adelaide, with a mingled sigh and smile.

"Then why not put a period to my uneasiness by telling me plainly that you will be mine; —by fixing a term when the happiness you promise me will be recognized by all the world?"

"I have already confided to you my motives for delay," — replied Lady Adelaide, mildly. "That unfortunate man whose name it is so painful to me to pronounce, is on his deathbed!— I have never concealed from you that legal obstacles *might* be raised against my second marriage, were any enemy so disposed; surmountable indeed, — but not without trouble, and what I detest far more than trouble,—publicity! —Why, therefore, expose me to these annoy-

ances, when a few weeks, at most a few months —will annihilate them altogether?"—

Lord Monthermer pressed in silence the beloved arm that was resting on his own.

"I bring you no fortune,—I bring you nothing that the world accounts of value—"

"You bring me a treasure far, far beyond the estimation of vulgar minds!" interrupted Monthermer, with becoming spirit and magnanimity.—

"I am not even so fortunate as to unite with yours a name undimmed by the reproaches of the world. The malice of society has fearfully avenged upon me the distinctions conferred by the homage of a chosen few. It is therefore doubly incumbent on me to secure you, to secure myself,— (suffer me to say *ourselves*,) from a renewal of the attacks which have sunk only too deep into my soul. None

know what I have suffered,—none know what I still suffer from a stigma by which the world has visited upon me a misfortune as if it were a crime!"

Lord Monthermer fancied he could discern from the tremulous tone of Lady Adelaide's voice, that some natural tears were about to fall; and to remove her as much as possible from the observation of the curious, he directed her steps towards a remote bench, in the nook of the garden furthest from the banqueting room, and consequently from the crowd.

A pause—a painful pause ensued between them.

"But even if I submit to your cruel decree and consent to this delay," said he at length, breaking silence in a tone of deep concern and tenderness,—"would it not be desirable for us to leave town?—Might not the world, which you admit to be your enemy, interpret harshly

your being seen in public, at fêtes and entertainments, while Lord Sherburne lies expiring?"—

"How!"—cried Lady Adelaide with amazement, "would you have me convey an impression to the mind of society that I feel myself to blame,—that I regret what I have done,—that I entertain an affection for a miserable maniac, by whom my happiness—my life—has been put in peril?"

"The world would distinguish between personal tenderness and consideration for the father of your child. It is a mere matter of form,—a sacrifice to the prejudices of the multitude."

"In my opinion prejudices of all kinds are unworthy of a sacrifice," said Lady Adelaide, gravely.

"But *is* it a sacrifice?—You assure me you are weary of the frivolous throngs in which we force ourselves to appear. You complain

of fatigue and lassitude arising from your exertions?—*Why* incur such a penalty?—What is there to reward us for the loss of our ease,—our tranquillity,—our happy social evenings?—My own, my dearest Adelaide,—I beseech you let us quit London!—Let us enjoy in Northamptonshire this delicious season,—charming even here,—and in our own glorious woods, how doubly enchanting!"

"You speak as if I could go and reside with you at Bridgnorth Castle!"—exclaimed the lady,—"you forget that"—

"No—I forget none of the happy privileges which you deny me!—I know that we must reside apart. But Woodlands is only five miles from the castle.—I might be Lord Colebrooke's daily guest,—I"—

"My father has broken up his establishment at Woodlands,—he has no thoughts of returning there again."—

"But what should prevent Lord Colebrooke from visiting me at the castle?"

"That which you prize so highly,—the opinion of the world. It is not the custom for engaged persons to live together."

"But as our engagement is no matter of notoriety?—"

"Nor to say the truth," pursued Lady Adelaide, "could I presume to expect that my father would renounce his projects and give up his season in town to which, after passing two winters abroad to gratify my inclinations, he has been looking forward with so much delight. He has here his old friends about him,—his political associates—his medical advisers.—My father's health is precarious,—at *his* time of life, every additional attack of gout becomes alarming. Believe me it is out of my power to request him to give up London."

Lord Monthermer sighed heavily; for Lady Adelaide's arguments were uncontrovertible.

"Even *you*," she added, with a smile, "exhibit some symptoms of the predilection which most men feel for a spot where they are secure of the conversation of the wise and intellectual."

"Nay," replied he, "I fancy *I* am tolerably safe from the accusation of a preference for London!"

"Yet though you actually propose to carry home a wife with you," resumed his lovely friend, with one of her blandest smiles, "you have actually never taken the trouble to examine whether Bachelor Hall is in a state to receive her!—It is thirty years since the death of Lady Shropshire; and, if I am to infer any thing from the habits of its late occupants—"

"Do not abuse them, Lord Shropshire was your father's friend!—I have even heard it

whispered that my cousin was not without hopes of obtaining your hand."

"There is no accounting for the hopes hazarded by such men as Lord Bridgnorth. Take it from me, however, that I had never more idea of accepting him than of marrying your uncle. But had such a thing been possible, I am convinced that poor Lord Bridgnorth, in spite of his *rouerie,* would have been less harsh a monitor than yourself,—less *exigeant* a lover,—less ungallant a husband. And now, let us to breakfast,—for I am on the point of scolding you outright."

Never had Monthermer beheld Lady Adelaide so attractive as during the *déjeûner* that followed. Too prudent to accept exclusive attentions from the man whom all London regarded as her future lord, she divided her smiles between him and the Comte de Mondyon and her conversation between him and St.

Leger Kerr. Gifted with all the *finesse* which expresses itself so elegantly in French, the attention of all around them was fascinated by the repartees elicited from the acute and brilliant Kerr, by the liveliness of two persons so versed in *l'esprit de société* as Mondyon and Lady Adelaide de Vere; and the monotony of an English banquet was at once, and for once, enlivened as by the flashing of a sudden flight of *lucciole.* The Duchess of Havering had cleverness enough to catch the ball at the rebound; and so animated grew the end of the table monopolized by the little coterie, that Lady Sudford was out of all patience at beholding every eye directed towards the luminous countenance of her beautiful sister-in-law.

Lord Monthermer drove back to town a very happy man. It was twilight, and no parasol was now thrust into his eyes; no Lord De Bathe, no Lady Phalaris, was present as a

drawback. Nay,—he might have laid his head that night upon his pillow uncrazed by a care, had he not in the interim encountered, at the party at L—— House, that very troublesome insect, the attaché.

"Where have you been dining?" drawled Harford; "your eyes are sparkling and your cheeks burning with champagne!"—

"My eyes sparkle with joy—and my cheeks are merely sunburnt," replied Monthermer, "for I did not dine at all. After breakfasting at Lady Glenvillian's, I went to the French play, from whence I am just arrived."

"At Lady Glenvillian's!—Oh! you *went* to Lady Glenvillian's?—Was it worth the bore of the ride?"

"I did not even ride,—since you force me to be so circumstantial. The *déjeûner* was the pleasantest I ever experienced."

"Pleasant, was it? I could have got there,

if I had liked. But Lady Adelaide told me she had particular reasons for not wishing me to be there. Is she coming to-night?"

"I put her ladyship into the carriage to go home after the French play," replied Lord Monthermer, coldly.

"The devil you did!"—was Mr. Harford's polite rejoinder. And there was something in his tone of giving utterance to that brief phrase, which sent Lord Monthermer home to drink Seltzer water after his dinner of cold tongue and anchovy sandwiches, preparatory to a night of physical and moral indigestion.

CHAPTER VIII.

On passe par différens goûts
En passant par différens âges ;—
Plaisir est le bonheur des fous,
Bonheur est le plaisir des sages.

PARNY.

NEXT day came Ascot,—the only races of all England where the company is as well bred as the horses. Monthermer was to accompany the Duchess of Havering and her niece, having sent down his horses for the course the preceding evening; and it was some comfort, while enduring two hours and a half of sun and dust,

(to say nothing of the *haut goût* of Hammersmith and Brentford,) to feel that, on the fresh, heathy course, in his own carriage, he should enjoy unmolested the conversation of those who, on the road, could scarcely open their lips or eyes for fear of choking or the ophthalmia.

Immediately however on reaching the heath, it was their fortune to encounter the royal cortège; and an invitation to the royal stand was immediately despatched to the Duchess of Foreign affairs, and the daughter of Lord Colebrooke. Submission was inevitable; and it was not till the close of an extremely tedious, sultry, fatiguing day, that Monthermer found himself admitted once more to their society—for the enjoyment of more dust,—more sweet savour of Brentford and Hammersmith,—and the satisfaction of acting audience to the two

yawning ladies who were exchanging remarks concerning their morning's amusement. For the duchess and Lady Adelaide were compelled to hurry back, to a brilliant dinner engagement at the French Ambassador's; while Monthermer's only resource was solitude in Grosvenor Square, or publicity at one of his clubs.

On arriving, however, and finding not only his *petit couvert* delicately prepared, but a letter from Gerald Wroughton lying on the table, he decided in favour of home; and his vexations of the morning were almost compensated by the cheering tone of this welcome communication from his brother-in-law. The letter was dated from Santa Maura. Gerald, by the advice of his friend Dr. Moorsom, was proceeding leisurely in his progress; but he wrote in evident enjoyment of the novel scenes he

was visiting. He had been cruising with Lord George Cloudsley, in the Archipelago; and the gay narrative of their adventures displayed more of the tone and character becoming his years, than any thing Monthermer had yet perused from his pen.

"Poor Mary De Ligne would be quite content, did she know how rapidly Gerald has surmounted the disappointments she fancied he must take so much to heart!"—mused Monthermer, over his lonely dinner. "That girl is certainly attached to Gerald!—So artless as she is, I verily believe my little friend is wholly unconscious of her infatuation. But what can be more natural?—Brought up in the familiar friendship of neighbour's children, the sentiment has grown with her growth, till it has become as much a portion of herself as her duty to her parents, or love for her brothers and sisters. To such fine impulses of feeling,

men are unfortunately less addicted! Gerald, a wanderer over half the world, has sought his pleasures elsewhere than in Northamptonshire, and will never regard Mary De Ligne as more than the good humoured little girl in a white frock, with whom at six years old he used to quarrel at ninepins. Would to heaven it were otherwise! Nothing would settle him down in life, so surely as a happy marriage."

It *might*, perhaps, occur at that moment to Lord Monthermer, as he pondered over his claret, that Mr. and Mrs. Wroughton, enjoying a happy domesticity at Wroughton Hall, would be more agreeable neighbours to Lord and Lady Monthermer of Bridgnorth Castle, than a bachelor Gerald Wroughton, whose reminiscences of Naples could not be altogether obliterated. For the result of his cogitations was a resolve to proceed to the Duchess of Kimbolton's concert, (which he had previously

determined to renounce on the plea of fatigue,) that he might talk with Mary over the letter he had received.

Few entertainments are more popular in London than first-rate private concerts. The hostess, by whom a good concert is given, pledges herself to the world as a woman preferring expense to trouble; who would rather have her company amused by Grisi and Tamburini than by her personal exertions; expending from one hundred to two hundred and fifty guineas, sooner than allow her house to be distracted by a ball. But the concert-giver, if a concert-giver of discretion, should make up her mind to remain a cipher in the concert-room which her indolence has created. After forming her engagements six weeks beforehand, so as not to jar with those of her singers and musicians, (though with the chance of precipitating her party into the influenza,

a court or family mourning,) she must resign herself, when the time draws near, to learn from her leader and *his* leaders what windows are to be nailed down in her rooms, what doors nailed open;—where the piano is to stand with which they have superseded her own fine Broadwood,—and where she is to stand herself, to receive her company. The carpet in the music-room must be taken up or a hole cut in it to receive the piano; the benches must be placed according as the prima donna fancies she looks best, in full face or profile; and the concert begin to a second at a quarter to nine, when the room boasts only the presence of two deaf dowagers, a bishop's wife, and a country cousin; the professionals having engagements elsewhere.

All this, the Duchess of Kimbolton in the agonies of her concert, had not anticipated. She expected to deal with the "people"

she hired for her party at twenty guineas per night, as with those she hired for her servants' hall, at thirty per annum; and her first proceeding, after retaining half a dozen of the finest performers in Europe, and another half dozen of secondary merit, was to issue a list of the music she intended to have performed, as she would have issued a *menu* to her *chef*, for the dishes to be served at dinner.

Nothing could exceed her grace's astonishment on learning that not a single piece she had asked for, could be executed at her concert! One cavatina had been worn out the preceding season,—one was secured by its ugliness from any such consummation,—one was Bellini's weakest composition, another too strong for the party to which she had assigned it. Nothing could be more unfair than requiring a duet between Grisi and a second-rate tenor, or demanding from the first tenor an aria imme-

diately after a sestetto, in which the voices of Tamburini and Lablache were to put the strength of her grace's walls to the test. The duchess's programme, in short, was ex-professional, and negatived without a division.

Signora A. had brought over with her from the continent certain new pieces which she could not venture at the Philharmonic till the assay had been made elsewhere;—Signor B. wanted to succeed to certain songs discarded by Rubini, and chose the house of an unscientific concert-giver to hazard the attempt;—while all the anxiety avowed by Tamburini and Lablache was to get their pieces so arranged as not to interfere with other engagements. They had regulated the price of their stay at the Duchess of Kimbolton's, at just a guinea per minute. It was evidently a great favour on their parts to sing for her at all;—and they must of course determine the mark and manner of the condescension.

The duchess was furious. Accustomed to rule with undivided sway and having never before given a concert, she fancied an orchestra as easy to control as a borough or a village. But the things she hinted in her haste, produced no other effect than causing her to be told at leisure that, if she interfered further, her best performers would throw up their engagement; and as her concert had been widely announced by the newspapers, and the concert cards were printed and dispersed, rather than encounter a failure,—a sky without stars,—an orchestra *sans prima donna*,—she withdrew in sullen acquiescence from the contest!

There was no remedy. Even if she put off her entertainment, the impertinence of the refractory performers must be paid in coin of the realm.

Such was her state of mind when the day dawned which was to take the fashionable world

to Ascot, and bring it back to her concert. But by the time Lord Monthermer entered the house, things had attained a far more tremendous crisis. A concert having been suddenly required at Windsor Castle, all the first fiddlers were fiddling in the county of Bucks; and of the second, one singer had caught a hoarseness at Ascot the preceding day, and another (like a fashionable physician called in for consultation) was sulky at not having had his services required in the first instance. A few of the original programmes, containing the names and intended performances of the *corps d'élite*, were unfortunately circulated by mistake in the music-room, to render the company more discontented, and the duchess more indignant. *Tout n'est pas bénéfice dans ce monde.* The pleasures of party-givers are often extremely painful!

To find the Duchess of Kimbolton out of humour, was no novelty to those who saw her so

often as Lord Monthermer. But it was easy to pass on through the concert-room to an inner drawing-room; where Mary, gay as a bird and fresh as a rose, was doing the honours of the house to her young friends.

"How glad I am to see you!" was her honest form of greeting. "Gerald Wroughton's friend, Mr. Hamilton, is in the other room listening to the music, and wants so much to talk to you!"

"It is dreadfully hot in the other room, or I should not have been able to tear myself away from that divine Persiani!" cried one of the little Miss Mitchells, fanning herself violently to attract Monthermer's attention. "I do so dote upon a concert!"

"*I* don't!" replied Mary, hastily.

"Oh! fie, my dear!—I am quite shocked to hear you say so. All people of good taste are

wild just now after concerts. Concerts are quite the rage!"

"Yes—I know it is right and proper to be enthusiastic about Italian music;—I know it is a mark of good breeding to prefer a concert to a ball. But I am fond of dancing—"

"Not fonder than of music, my dear, I hope and trust!"

"Yes,—much fonder. Ten or fifteen years hence, I may prefer a concert;—my present passion is a ball."

"You certainly differ in taste from the rest of society."

"Only put your head into the next room for a moment, and listen to the whispering which is going on. I am convinced that many women, and most men, detest a regular concert, which puts an end to all conversation. Instrumental music is but a refined species of torture to

them ; and it is only something really interesting to their feelings, because really expressive of feeling (such as Pasta's overpowering airs, or Loïsa Puget's romances), which are not felt as a restraint."

" Well, I never *should* have believed this of you, my dear Miss De Ligne, had I not heard it from your own lips!" cried Clotilda Mitchell with affected wonderment.

" Don't fancy that I am not fond of music. I like it in its place,—in a theatre,—in a public concert-room. But I should as soon wish to hear scenes from Othello or Macbeth performed in a crowded party to which I repaired to chat with my friends, as listen to one of Beethoven's symphonies, or Grisi's mad scenes."

Lord Monthermer, entertaining small respect for the strength of Mary's understanding, gave little attention, and no interruption, to the

twitter between her and her young lady friends; but he seized the first pause to tell her, aside, that he had received a letter from Wroughton who was both well and happy, or rather, both merry and wise.

"By *wise*, you mean that he has surmounted his disappointment?"—said Mary, her colour rising to her temples.

"Wholly."

"And when does he come home, then?—Surely you will persuade him to come home?"

"He will, perhaps, enjoy home the more by not returning to it too soon. Gerald is off to Constantinople; from Constantinople, he talks of visiting Persia—"

"Persia?—What an undertaking!—Why, he will not return to England for the next five years."

"He will return, I fancy, next spring," replied Monthermer; and it was with difficulty

he refrained from asking the warm-hearted little girl whether she could remain faithful so long.

"Next spring!—nearly a year! How tired poor Emma must be of his absence! How anxious she must feel to get him home again!"

"Not so anxious as you might suppose. Emma's feelings are engrossed by the care of my little girl and boy—"

"Do you hear *that*, Mr. Hamilton?" cried Mary, addressing a handsome young man in black, who had been presented to Monthermer as a college friend of Gerald, on the night of his own ball. "Lord Monthermer asserts that Miss Wroughton can think of nothing but her little nephew and niece."

"No duty undertaken by Miss Wroughton will be fulfilled by halves," replied the handsome stranger.

"Well, if you are not surprised at hearing that Emma has forgotten us, be at least astonished to

learn that Mr. Wroughton writes to Lord Monthermer in the highest spirits,—that he is no more in love than you or I,—that he is enjoying his travels and intending to settle next spring at Wroughton Hall. Is not that delightful?"

"Delightful, and, as you observe, surprising!" replied Basil Hamilton. "To say the truth," said he, drawing towards Lord Monthermer, "I have received less satisfactory accounts. I have reason to fear, my lord, that my poor friend Wroughton's health is *not* improving."

"His own account, I imagine, may be relied on," said Monthermer. "He says he never felt better in his life. *Surely* his own account is to be relied on!"

"Perhaps not."

"What motive can he have for deceiving me?"

"He may deceive himself."

"But who is there about him to be more clear-sighted?"

"Unfortunately, no one! I had a communication some time since from Dr. Moorsom, expressing great uneasiness on Gerald's account."

"Some time since, remember. *My* letter is dated a fortnight ago."

"A letter from Moorsom, expressing uneasiness on my friend Gerald's account," persisted Mr. Hamilton; "and stating that were he able to obtain the consent of Mrs. St. Paul (to remain with whom two years, he is pledged by agreement) he would start off after his young friend."

"Moorsom was bent, perhaps, on an agreeable expedition."

"Dr. Moorsom is the least selfish man I ever met with."

"Like all physicians, he is apt to seek ailments in the convalescent."

"Moorsom is more Gerald's *friend* than his physician; and from his manner of writing I fear he considered him in a precarious state. He did all in his power to prevent Wroughton from quitting Naples; and has been in constant intercourse by letter with him since his departure."

"Very extraordinary,—that Dr. Moorsom should have thought it necessary to communicate all this to a comparative stranger!" said Monthermer, exceedingly nettled.

"He is aware that Wroughton regards me as a bosom friend,—almost a brother," replied young Hamilton, proudly.

"Still, considering the position I hold towards Gerald, and my intimacy with Dr. Moorsom,—it would have been natural to admit me to his confidence."

"Has there not been,"—inquired Hamilton,

in a hesitating manner—"some little cessation lately of cordiality between Dr. Moorsom and your lordship?"

"None, that I am aware of," replied Monthermer, greatly surprised.

"May not Dr. Moorsom have supposed,—have imagined,—have resented on behalf of Wroughton,—But I am very wrong," said he, interrupting himself,—"to enter upon affairs which I do not wholly understand. I can only say that an impression exists in my mind of some degree of coolness between your lordship and Dr. Moorsom."

Unluckily, their conversation was interrupted by Mary, who, having thrown off her giggling companions, was glad to seize any opportunity to talk of Gerald or rather to hear Gerald talked of; and it was greatly to her mortification that on joining the two gentlemen,

Lord Monthermer, not choosing a third person to witness his emotion, gave a hint to Basil Hamilton to be cautious, by adding—"I should be glad to converse further with you on all this. Could you do me the favour of calling in Grosvenor Square to-morrow, at one?"—to which the young man replied that it had been his intention to request an audience of his lordship, previous to quitting town.

Lord Monthermer's spirits were already greatly depressed by all he had been hearing. He had as little courage for general conversation as for his solitary home. He wished to avoid every one but Mary, to whom the subject engrossing his mind was as dear as to himself; and by his manner of inviting her to accompany him into the music-room, and after sitting an hour abstracted by her side, carrying her off

into the refreshment-room, gave rise to a strong rumour that things were "*off* between Lord Monthermer and Lady Adelaide de Vere, and *on* between Lord Monthermer and the daughter of the esquire of High Grove!"

CHAPTER IX.

The hours, the minutes of our lives are big with incident: the fruits of past, the flowers of coming years,—the hopes, the fears, the sighs, the smiles,—the unrecorded but not unfelt impurities of our nature,—the evil struggling with the good,—who would dare to read the faithful record of their own heart's thoughts, if they could have been recorded?

Mrs. S. C. Hall.

The errand of the Reverend Basil Hamilton with the Right Hon. Lord Monthermer was such as may, perhaps, cause less surprise to our readers than to a man inthralled by the spells of a Lady Adelaide de Vere. He

wished for nothing less than the sanction of Emma Wroughton's guardian and brother-in-law, to his proposals for the honour of her hand. A family-living destined by Mr. De Ligne to his second son (a young gentleman still in Nankin frocks and an ivory alphabet) having unexpectedly fallen vacant, had been offered by the good squire to a young man of whose principles and abilities he entertained the highest opinion, and for whom his young friends the Wroughtons cherished a strong affection; and Hamilton, with the prospect of twenty years' enjoyment of an income of nine hundred a year in addition to his hereditary two, felt himself justified in pretending to a happiness hitherto above his hopes.

Accepted unconditionally by Emma, he had already written to Gerald; and was bent on obtaining, in the interim of receiving his answer, the sanction of Lord Monthermer to his visits

at Wroughton Hall. Even Basil Hamilton's integrity, however, did not consider itself impeached by withholding from his lordship the information that, by Emma's desire, he had been loitering a week in town, frequenting fashionable balls and fashionable concerts, in order to examine into his lordship's entanglements and satisfy the misgivings of the anxious aunt.

Meanwhile, though astonished, Lord Monthermer was by no means displeased. He had never anticipated for his sister-in-law what is considered a brilliant destiny. Emma Wroughton's habits and hopes were adapted to a life of retirement; and, if her happiness were to be secured by espousing a country clergyman in preference to a country squire, where was the objection? With all his contempt for the manners of his High Grove neighbours, Monthermer knew enough of De

Ligne to be certain that he would not have bestowed a living,—a family living, moreover, of which the glebe formed part and parcel of his estate,—on any one not wholly worthy to receive the hand of Miss Wroughton; and he therefore not only freely consented to bestow his sister-in-law and his sister-in-law's twenty thousand pounds upon the favoured aspirant, but with a cordial shake of the hand, promised his own patronage and interest to forward his advancement in the church.

"If Emma had taken me into her confidence," said he, "all this might have been settled earlier."

"Even had my prospects in life enabled me to propose an engagement," replied Hamilton, "Emma would not have consented to a marriage so long as your residence abroad assigned your children to her care. But as you have decided that she is to give them up in August,

nothing need interfere with our plans. We could have wished her brother to be present at our union; but that happiness is out of the question."

As Monthermer's thoughts gradually adjusted themselves to this new position of affairs in his family, he began to rejoice selfishly in Miss Wroughton's prospects. The sagacious Emma, engrossed by a home and husband of her own, would be a very different object in the eyes of the second wife of the widower of Marcella, from the maiden sister-in-law, and aunt in nature, prompt to pry, to object, to blame, in all matters connected with the children. The worthy Mrs. Margaret would, doubtless, divide her time between High Grove rectory and Wroughton Hall; by which an additional annoyance would be spared to the future Lady Monthermer; and he even felt that it would be easier to break the secret of

his intended marriage to the Mrs. Basil Hamilton for whom he promised himself to do so much, than to a spinster malcontent, judging his conduct with her judgment rather than with her feelings.

"I propose to leave town for Wroughton by the mail on Monday night," said Hamilton, as he was taking leave of his friendly relative. "Have you any commands?"

"Defer your departure till the following morning, and allow me the pleasure of taking you down?"—replied Lord Monthermer. "I am under the necessity of visiting Bridgnorth Castle. My architect has been besetting me for the last fortnight to pronounce upon his plans for some new offices; and I shall gladly avail myself of the opportunity to offer my congratulations to dear Emma."

Mr. Hamilton was duly grateful. "If you have formed no projects for to-day," added

Lord Monthermer, "pray, dine with me, and accompany me to the opera? We have still to discuss the unwelcome tidings you gave me last night of poor Gerald."

Mr. Hamilton was acquiescent; and the moment he left the house, away flew Monthermer in his cab to Arlington Street, to communicate the unexpected results of the interview to the person most deeply interested. But Lady Adelaide, he was informed at the door, though "at home," was engaged,—"particularly engaged." To *him*, however, he felt that such a pretext could not have been addressed; and he accordingly pushed his way into the drawing-room, and through the drawing-room into the boudoir. Her ladyship was alone, as usual at that hour; and, as usual, attired in a long white wrapper, her hair arranged with classical simplicity. Nothing but perfect beauty could have looked beautiful

so devoid of ornament or coquetry; but never was Lady Adelaide de Vere seen to greater advantage than in this undress. Lord Monthermer stood for a moment silent on the threshold to contemplate her as she sat bending over the letter she was writing,—absorbed in her occupation, and stirring only at intervals to throw back from her cheek a loosened braid of hair.

He spoke,—and the charm was dissolved. "Ha! is it you?" cried she, starting up. "I desired them to tell you, if you called, that I was busy writing letters."

"They *did*,—but I refused to admit such a plea;—I shall be quite content to sit silent in yonder reading-chair, watching you while you resume your task."

"My task is over," said Lady Adelaide, (folding up first her own letter, and then a second,—a very long one,—which was lying open on the table and which she now locked

carefully into her desk), "or I should persist in enforcing my decree. I can never write when people are looking on."

"When *people!*—But a second self, like *my* self, may surely be exempted from the opprobrious term?—I trust you will one day or other find it extremely possible to write a letter while I am seated close by your side."

Lady Adelaide tried to smile, as she stood completing the sealing of her epistle; and while the light of the taper fleckered on her face, Lord Monthermer fancied he could discern that her eyes were red,—that she had been weeping.—He would have given much for courage to inquire to whom so affecting a missive was addressed. Chance remedied his deficiency of self-possession.

"Give this letter to the servant," said she to the footman, who, some moments afterwards, answered her summons.

"To what servant, my lady?" inquired the man.

"To the servant who is waiting for an answer," she added, with a conscious blush.

"My lady, there are *two* waiting,—Sir Jacob Harford's and—"

"No—*not* Sir Jacob Harford's," interrupted her ladyship, "the other."

"Lady Phalaris's page, my lady?"—persisted the footman, determined to secure the most circumstantial instructions.

"Yes,—go,—lose no time!"

And while the stupid footman quickened his departure, Monthermer retreated to the window, deep in atmospherical observations of the sky somewhere towards the chimney-tops of Pimlico.

"I am at your service now," said Lady Adelaide, in her softest tones,—having deliberately replaced the taper and sealingwax in their usual position.

"Have you, then, no answer to send to Sir Jacob?" demanded Lord Monthermer, almost severely.

"What communication do you suppose *me* likely to hold with such a person as Sir Jacob Harford? He is my father's, or Sudford's banker; and his servant is, perhaps, waiting for an answer from one of *them*."

Readily conjecturing that a letter to Lord Colebrooke from his banker, might be of a disagreeable nature, Monthermer said no more; but the thorn still rankled in his side implanted there by Lady Adelaide's voluminous communication with the Countess Dowager. The gentle lady was luckily in a more than ordinary disposition of amenity; for she not only forgave his gruffness, but tried to court him into better humour,—expressed her regret at the contrariety they had experienced at Ascot the preceding day,—amused him with a piquant ac-

count of her diplomatic dinner,—and, finally, alluded playfully to the rumour of his flirtation at the Duchess of Kimbolton's concert, with Mary De Ligne.

"Be so good as to remember," said she, "that at parting yesterday, you assured me you had no intention of going to the concert."

"Nor had I! I was driven there by my desire to converse with little Mary De Ligne—"

"Did I not say as much?"

"Concerning a letter I had just received from poor Wroughton," added Monthermer, completing his sentence; and at the mention of that name, Lady Adelaide's countenance fell in a moment.

"I have certainly found no reason to repent having overcome my dislike to the Duchess of Kimbolton's parties," he continued; "for I heard, in consequence of being there, some family news at which I am delighted!"

"Indeed?"

"My sister-in-law, Miss Wroughton, is going to be married?"—

"*Well* married?"

"Excellently, according to *her* notion, for she marries a man to whom she has been long attached."

"And holding a good position in the world?"—

"Holding a good living."

"A country clergyman!—I was not aware that Miss Wroughton was of a serious turn?"

"Emma is not of a *worldly* turn."

"I trust she will be happy," observed Lady Adelaide, becoming quickly alive to the advantage Bridgnorth Castle would derive from aunt Emma's settlement in life. "And when does this happy event take place?"

"Immediately;—I am going into Northamptonshire with the bridegroom, on Monday next."

"Quite right!" observed Lady Adelaide, brightening. "You owe the utmost respect to every member of the Wroughton family; and you will profit by the occasion to make your building arrangements?"

"Of course—but what a weary time for me till I get back to London!"

"You are not aware how many claims you may find on your attention, when once in the country."

"Only too many I fear;—for I shall certainly *brusquer* them all!"

"No, you will not!—I am persuaded you will do every thing that is just and reasonable!"

"If *you* will be just and reasonable in the first instance; by setting my mind at ease, previous to my departure, by a definite engagement—a positive promise—that immediately on Lord Sherburne's decease you will be mine?"

"Am I *not* yours already?"—was the faint reply of Lady Adelaide.

"*I* mean mine in hand as well as heart,—mine in the sight of God and man,—at once and for ever!"

"Now, indeed, you speak seriously—"

"On a serious subject!"

"You almost alarm me," observed the lady, forcing a smile. "I am not accustomed to hear Cupid talk so like an archbishop!"

"Jest on any other topic;—but if you knew, dearest Adelaide, how thoroughly my heart and soul are bound up in the expectation of our union, you would see that it is no matter for pleasantry."

"I perfectly agree with you!"—she replied, with a glance that any man less madly in love would have discovered to be sarcastic.

"Have I then your promise?"

"You must permit me to consult my fa-

ther.—I will answer you to-morrow.—You will be here to-morrow?"

"What day of the week am I *not* here!—May I reckon on your definitive reply?"

"You may. Meanwhile, let us talk of something else;—that *you* may be a little less impetuous, and *I* a little less embarrassed. Will you believe it?—We had the Longman-Tompkinsons yesterday at the French ambassador's!"

"Why not?"—

"Because not having the entrée of a single decent house in town, they have brought over from Paris letters of introduction to the French minister's wife—with the idea that she will trouble herself to get an English family into society in London!"

"She may have persons to introduce far less respectable than the Longman-Tompkinsons." replied Monthermer.

"But certainly not more ridiculous. What

in fact *can* be more pitifully absurd than the conduct of people perpetually pushing themselves beyond the limits of their proper sphere?"

"All spheres are confounded nowadays!—I perceive no positive line of demarcation in society, unless the walls of Newgate or of Bethlem. Those of the King's Bench are none,—those of the King's Palace are none. No one is shut out,—no one is shut in!—Since Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson is stupid enough to consider her mansion in Carlton Terrace, or her seat at Stoke Park, incomplete unless filled with crowds of fine people who laugh at her folly, what objection have you to the indulgence of her foible?—Some people ruin themselves in pictures,—some in old China, some in chariots, some in horses,—why not in lords and ladies?"—

"I scarcely know you this morning!—What

means the vein of bitterness thus suddenly brought to light?"—cried Lady Adelaide. But Monthermer was spared the trouble of defending himself. At that moment, Lady Sudford came giggling into the room with an account of a miraculous cachmire *peignoir* just completed for her by the accomplished Mrs. Murray, to the inspection of which she insisted on carrying off her sister-in-law; and Lady Adelaide, though rarely deigning to interest herself in details of the toilet, was glad to affect an interest in the peignoir and its hanging sleeves, in order to escape the presence of her susceptible friend.

The day wore away.—Hamilton, who had been invited to a seven o'clock dinner, was punctual to a second; *so* punctual, that Monthermer, on his return from his morning's ride to Grosvenor Square, found him in quiet possession of the drawing-room. Basil did not think it necessary to allude to the awe with which he

had been taught to regard the sober, regular habits of Helmsley Abbey, during his college intimacy with Gerald. Though beginning to detect the extraordinary discrepancy between Delaval, Lord Monthermer, and Sir William, the country baronet,—he had too much tact to jest with one on the peculiarities of the other. Attributing such manifest want of ceremony on the part of his host to the desire of making the new comer consider himself already one of the family, he was highly gratified to be kept waiting for dinner an hour and a quarter.

Though humble in circumstances, Basil Hamilton was illustriously connected; and he was accustomed to sit at good men's feasts, and to be kept waiting. The dinner to which at length they sat down, did tolerable credit to the "artist of the Williams or Williamson class;" who, being salaried as head cook to the Right Honourable Lord Monthermer, was, of course,

gone to dress the dinner of some Mr. Smith Brown, in Russell Square, for a *con*-sideration of five guineas;—leaving it to the mercy of his deputy's deputy to scorch the cutlets and pepper the soup of his right honourable master.—The *tête-à-tête* passed off pleasantly enough. In the course of the three hours wasted in waiting for, devouring, and digesting dinner per aid of coffee and maraschino, Monthermer formed an advantageous judgment on his young companion; who, though too conscientious to travel on Sunday, had no scruple in listening to a good opera on Saturday night. Hamilton was intelligent, conversational, and abundantly gifted with the cheerfulness of mind so natural and becoming at an age still unrusted with the tediousness of society, still unruffled by the cares of life. He talked fluently and well. The world, at present so new to him, was suggestive of a thousand lively

comments, that passed for highly brilliant and original with his unimaginative host.

Of Lord Monthermer, on the other hand, Hamilton could by no means form a conclusive judgment. Gerald had formerly represented his brother-in-law as a strict, reserved man; Emma, more recently, as weak and inconsistent;—Basil Hamilton found him both,—and neither. Absent rather than reserved, Lord Monthermer indulged in sudden bursts of vivacity almost irrational. Yet, at times, his remarks were distinguished by sagacity and good sense. His house, his household, were equally irreconcilable with Hamilton's notions of the fitness of things. The noble family with which he was connected and on which he had been apt to model his opinions of the exigencies of the aristocratic estate, were stately, old-fashioned people. Their houses, both in town and country, belonged to the heavy order of old-

fashioned magnificence; and habituated to reverence their cumbrous solidity, he was tempted to regard as trivial, undignified, and out of place, the gaudy elegance by which he was surrounded.

Basil Hamilton had been accustomed to refer the full-blown gorgeousness of modern taste, to precedents far from honourable. He could understand the attempt of *parvenu* countesses to dazzle the eyes of their visitors by meretricious displays,—"gilding," *not* "refined gold," but humble deal;—and "painting" *not* "the lily," but the peony. In *them*, he admitted, such tawdriness of taste was pardonable and in keeping. But an hereditary peer of the realm might have found better things to rejoice in, than tables covered with fripperies of Sèvres china and or-moulu,—caskets of tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl,—Neapolitan whimsies of silver and coral,—agate *bonbonnières*,—or

orange-wood letter-cases. Even the plate introduced into the service of the dinner-table, was displeasing to the correct eye of the young critic. It was too modern, too elaborate, too fanciful. Every thing in the establishment was over done,—over active.—The scene wanted repose, and consequently dignity. Still, there was something to disarm criticism in the unpretending nature of the master of these obnoxious gewgaws; and Hamilton ended by attributing all to the true origin,—an unworthy influence exercised over a worthy nature.

Lord Monthermer was evidently the slave of a paramount power, to which his efforts were addressed. Even to enter so cordially and fully as he had intended to do and flattered himself he was doing, into the prospects of Emma's future husband, was impossible; and it was a relief to the self-love of both, when they entered the opera-house toge-

ther towards the end of the first act, and were joined by a noisy group of men, consisting of Royston, Flaszaski, Harford, Sir William Willets, and Colonel Bagot.

So good a name as Hamilton, and so good an air as was worn by its wearer, prepared these men of wit and honour about town to be friendly and courteous to the new comer. The idea of connecting the clerical estate with a well-made black coat, so well fitted on so well-made a man presented under the auspices of Lord Monthermer, did not occur to their minds; and the conversation accordingly took a turn which would have driven their new acquaintance at once from their society, had not Monthermer meanwhile disappeared, leaving his character at their disposal. Already they had begun to talk of poor Monthermer;—and Hamilton was riveted to the spot.

"I vow to Heaven!" cried Royston, "'tis

too provoking to see such a good fellow as Monthermer so imposed upon!—Now, *do* observe how he has taken up his post in her box, waiting till she condescends to make her appearance, that he may be on the spot to hand her to her seat!—I never saw a man more devoted,—or so thrown away."

Young Harford said nothing. A significant smile overspread his insipid features.

"She is certainly a splendid creature," added Sir William Willets, as the little *attaché* minced his steps away from them towards the staircase.

"Splendid!" ejaculated Flaszaski, who had his misgivings respecting the sable coat of their companion. "But I could no more *lofe* such a vomans, than I could eat a vaxen fruits. From de once a man corvince himself of a woman's absolute corruptions, I can understands he give up to her every tings—except his time. But von's life is so precious to trow

away !—and Monthermer he pass his *life* at de feet of Lady Adelheid."

The group of *roués* now proceeded to canvass other beauties gracing the gay assemblage around them, with a degree of freedom revolting to the ears of their companion. Painful was his conviction, that, could the ladies of the civilized creation be aware of the terms in which they are commented upon by certain of its lords, they would be less prodigal of their attractions in public places; nay, that many a woman endowed with feelings still pure, and thoughts still noble, would prefer the restrict seclusion of a Turkish *ménage*, or the housewifery of an ancient English, to the necessity of "running the gauntlet of a string of puppies," wanting in decency, chivalry, and truth !—But he noticed also, that, free as was the mode of discussion among his new acquaintance, not a woman present, however notoriously lost in

reputation, incurred the opprobrious epithets attached to Lady Adelaide de Vere. For the sentence pronounced upon the most offending of the unchaste, there was some qualifying clause:—"Lady A. was such a kind-hearted creature,"—"Lady B. so friendly, so charitable,"—"Mrs. C. so unapt to indulge in ill-natured remarks,"—"Lady D. such a good mother, or such an affectionate sister." But in Lady Adelaide's case, not a word of mitigation! Lady Adelaide they regarded as that monstrous thing,—a woman without a heart;—

> Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore,
> All ashes to the taste!—

a speculatress, an *intrigante*, a *chevalière d'industrie* in that worst species of gambling, which stakes every gift that ought to be held holy and precious among women, against a title and a marriage settlement!

Basil Hamilton was deeply grieved.—He was

almost sorry when the re-commencement of the opera put an end to revelations which every moment tended to arm him with strong resolutions. Two days before, his great anxiety had been to conciliate the goodwill of Monthermer, as guardian to Emma Wroughton. All he *now* desired was an opportunity to excite his everlasting displeasure, by warning him against the dangers of his connexion with Lady Adelaide de Vere.

So mighty, however, is the influence of beauty over the masculine understanding, that when, about the middle of the second act, he saw Lord Monthermer start from his seat in front of the box over which he had been leaning with his hands folded in complete mental abstraction, to resign it to the most lovely woman on whom the inexperienced eye of Basil had ever rested, a thousand excuses presented themselves, for the infatuation of his future brother-

in-law. It appeared little less than a libel on human nature, to place implicit faith in the accusations of the empty, boastful fellows, to whom he had been listening. That the high, fair, noble-looking brow which arrested his attention, could be connected with a base or feeble spirit, was impossible. The exquisite sweetness of that countenance *could* not be the mask of unworthy purposes. The swan-like throat and shoulders of Lady Adelaide de Vere, the easy, nymph-like grace of her symmetrical form, filled him with admiration as pure and enthusiastic as was ever inspired by the contemplation of some marble *chef d'œuvre* of antiquity. It would have been, in fact, difficult to conceive any thing more divinely beautiful than her appearance, as, arrayed in all her studied graces and effects, she sat conversing in feminine sweetness and reserve, with the enthralled and idolizing victim of her charms, before the eyes of eight hundred spectators!—

Basil hesitated. He would take time. He would inquire further ere he ventured to mar the hopes, and interfere with the happiness of a being so distinguished beyond her sex by the liberalities of nature. The diction of the poet, that

> Spirits are not finely touch'd, save to fine issues,

was extended by his liberal interpretation into a belief that beings overpoweringly beauteous and bright, must inherit somewhat of an angelic nature. The young divine forgot for a moment the beauty of Lucifer,—a fallen angel, albeit the "bringer of light!"

CHAPTER X.

We must look *within*
For that which makes us slaves; on sympathies
Which find no kindred objects in the plain
Of common life; affections that aspire
In air too thin—and fancy's dewy film
Floating for rest! For even such delicate threads,
Gather'd by fate's engrossing hand, supply
The eternal spindle whence she weaves the bond
Of cable strength, in which our nature struggles.

TALFOURD.

THE journey of the two young men towards Wroughton Hall, was less tedious than might have been conjectured by a third person invisibly inspecting their progress. Two portman-

teaux could not have travelled side by side with a more determined spirit of anti-communication; yet, at their journey's end, each fancied he had been agreeable to the other, so agreeable had his self-absorption rendered him himself!

On the eve of events so momentous to their happiness,—the one having just quitted, the other being about to rejoin the object of his adoration,—it would have been difficult to abstract their thoughts from the nothingnesses which fascinate a lover's ruminations, to plunge into the deep profound of politics,—flutter over the discussion of new works or London improvements; or still more, to particularize upon the vulgar incidents of journey observations,—the oddity of the signs, or picturesqueness of the cottages they were passing,—the antiquity of churches, or juvenility of lodge-gates and upstart plantations.

They arrived late. The children had been kept up; and their bright, affectionate faces, the frank cordiality of Emma and her aunt, and the delicious fragrance pervading the rooms from the neighbouring lawn and garden, seemed to abound in the wholesomeness and truth of nature, contrasted with the factitious existence which Lord Monthermer had been recently enjoying among the most artificial of the human race. Even after the children had been kissed and dismissed, the child-like simplicity of manners of Emma and the old lady, startled him with a feeling resembling remorse. There was nothing rustic in it;—it was perfectly feminine,—perfectly well-bred; but he experienced an uneasy emotion in calling to mind the lying jargon of that polished fabric, the Temple of Fashion. It was so long since he had heard an honest sentiment, uttered in a tone of truthfulness. The *unreality* of the people with whom

he had been lately associating, occurred to his mind.

Monthermer had often noticed how rarely people venture to be *themselves* amid the frivolity of London ;—how convinced they seem to be of the necessity of raising even their individual natures to the standard of the tawdry, artificial, gilt pasteboard order of things, instituted by their besotted taste. But he had never before intermingled a *personal regret* with the admission that affectation is the besetting sin of the day. He felt that Emma Wroughton's face, though far from regularly beautiful, was rendered more expressive by its radiant expression of honest joy, than those of the preceding night by their enhancement of jewels, rouge, and elaborate braids and ringlets. Even old Mrs. Margaret, though uneasy in her mind respecting the future fate of the little Delavals and their father, was bright-

ened into smiles by a conviction that the prospects of her niece secured the happiest of homes for her excellent Emma, and a *point d'appui* for the children of their lost Marcella. Her venerable countenance assumed a sort of serious gladness; and, for the first few hours after his return to the hall, Lord Monthermer wondered that he had ever fancied its monotony insipid, or the strictness of its inmates, repulsive.

A change had already come over the spirit of his opinions, however, when, on the following day, he began to prepare the way for the declaration of his matrimonial projects. He would have given much, that Lady Adelaide had enabled him to make it a positive announcement. He had hoped and intended, when planning his excursion into Northamptonshire, to bring her to the point of decision during the intervening days. But, with the tact which at all

times enabled her to baffle his schemes, she had managed never to see him alone. At the opera, young Harford remained fluttering about her the whole of the evening, like an insect flitting round a flower; and next morning, she contrived to defend herself against a *tête-à-tête*, by attaching her rattling sister-in-law to her side. By Lady Sudford, his lordship's sentimental air was so unmercifully rallied, as to disgust him almost out of an inclination for an interview with her by whom such coarse pleasantries were sanctioned; and, finally, at the concert in Grafton Street, where the Sunday evening of the whole party was concluded, so determinedly did she instal herself on a sofa between the two dowager Tory dukes, (who are in the habit of bringing their noses together whenever they meet in public, to make the world imagine they are whispering up an administration,) that to push aside the branches of the hedge of thorns

under cover of which the fair manœuvrer had ensconced herself, was out of the question. He announced his journey, — repeated and re-repeated the announcement,—with looks whose significance he fancied to speak volumes, and which *really* spoke chapters. But not a word beyond the compliments usual on such occasions, could he elicit in return! She "trusted he would have a pleasant journey,—that he would not extend his stay beyond the time he named;"—there was no extracting a satisfactory word from her lovely lips!

Still, the duty he came to Wroughton Hall to discharge must be discharged as duly as if, instead of having pledged *himself* leaving the idol of his soul unpledged, he had arrived there bound in the silken ties of betrothment. Though virtually free, Lady Adelaide had morally plighted her faith. By inference, she had avowed an attachment for him,—by inference,

promised to be his; and, if her unprecedented position rendered her unusually averse to the *scenes* of positive acceptance and a formal explanation with her father, she had at least gone too far to recede. "She was *his* in the eye of Heaven,"—according to the jesuitical phrase of those who are equivocating with their conscience and the world!

With this conviction, and having determined to proceed to the castle early on the following day, Lord Monthermer rejoiced in the opportunity afforded for a general explanation, when, in the cool of that delicious summer afternoon, he discovered Hamilton seated between Emma and her aunt under the shade of a fine group of beech-trees ornamenting the lawn,—discoursing of past anxiety and happiness to come. The liberal part he intended to act towards its extension, was easily unfolded; for the explanation was to excite unqualified satisfaction in

his hearers. But when, after dwelling as long as the delicacy of his position as a benefactor would admit upon all he intended to effect for Hamilton and his bride, he approached the subject of his own prospects, his speech became embarrassed and his looks troubled.

The appearance of Harry and his sister on the gravel-walk, with a wheelbarrow containing their gardening implements and the slouched straw hats intended to shade their little faces from the sun, suggested a text for his discourse; and after having, for the twentieth time, assured Miss Wroughton she had every prospect of being the happiest of women,—he launched forth into a prophecy that in the domestic joys of such a lot, she must necessarily lose sight of her adopted pupils.

"Never!" was Emma Wroughton's fervent reply; "that is," added she, in a qualifying

tone,—" never, so long as you wish me to retain the control of their education."

" Do you imagine me so unreasonable as to protract such an occupation, *now?*" demanded Monthermer, with a smile intended to disguise his agitation.—" No, no, Emma!—I know too well what reliance is to be placed on bridal resolutions. Hitherto, you have had no will but your own,—henceforward you must submit yourself to that of Hamilton."

" In the present case, Hamilton's is *hers*,"—replied Basil, with a cordial, affectionate smile. But Emma resisted her inclination to reply. She saw that Monthermer was only trying to gain time with a hope of conquering his confusion.

" Make no rash vows!" resumed her agitated brother-in-law. " Nay,—my dear Emma, I had better at once remove your scruples of conscience, by avowing that the dear children are likely to receive such a compensation for

their double loss, as will render it less important to their future happiness. They will soon, I trust, find an affectionate mother in Lady Adelaide de Vere; and my house a mistress delighting to welcome you to a roof which you must still regard as a second home."

Emma made two efforts to speak; but, without tears, it was impossible; and she did not wish at such a moment to appear ungrateful in the betrayal of her anguish. Basil sat as silent from surprise, as Miss Wroughton from mortification; while Aunt Margaret, "frighted from her propriety," suddenly exploded with—"Well—God's will be done!—I always feared it would be so!—I am sure Lord Monthermer, I congratulate you with all my heart;—that is, I mean I heartily hope it may all turn out for your happiness."

"When is the event to take place?" was Emma's abrupt and sole inquiry,—(she little knew how embarrassing a one to Lord Mon-

thermer! and his reply that "nothing was at present settled," sounded in her ear only like one of the verbal evasions through which people seem privileged to indulge in the polite art of lying concerning the when, why, and wherefore of their matrimonial schemes.

It was strange!—The announcement of her own match,—and Basil's presence in the house, had created no embarrassment among the parties. So well did their characters assimilate, that it appeared as if he had been always a dweller among them,—an offset from the family. But a mere hint from Monthermer, that the children were likely to have a mother-in-law, seemed to raise up an iron barrier in the midst of the family! It would have been puzzling to declare which seemed the most awkward, when they met at dinner—the purposed bridegroom, or those who had been constrained to express satisfaction in his prospects!

Lord Monthermer was deeply mortified. However amiable his disposition, the frame of his mind was far from lofty; and he had flattered himself that it would be impossible for Emma and Aunt Margaret to hold out against his choice, at the moment he was securing to them so splendid a share of the good things of this world, in place of the modest competence they had anticipated.—As if a few hundreds a year more or less could silence the suggestions of their plain good sense!—

It was a glorious evening;—one of those days of the English year which repay our many months of humidity and gloom, by snatches of atmospheric enjoyment unattainable in climates of better renown;—when the luxurious fervours of summer by which the flowers are hastened into bloom and the fruits into ripeness before our eyes, are tempered by the grassy verdure under our feet and the deeply embed-

ding foliage of the woods. For after all, what nook of foreign landscape, however imposing its mountain summits, or romantic the effect of its ruined temple standing out in relief against the sky,—its taper cypress—its spreading palm or scriptural cedar,—can conjure up the home associations evolved by the almost sacred stillness of an English park, — with its woods, waters, and greensward,—its herded deer,—and perhaps a favourite old horse or two, gray and shaggy with age and consecrated to family respect by memories of the dead?—

And such was the scene which lay within view of the old dining-room of panelled oak, in which Monthermer, the lovers, and the good old aunt, sat watching the crimson glow deepening in the western sky,—and finding in the contemplation, suggestions that relieved them from the awkwardness of silence which had gradually pervaded the party.—They were pleased to hear

Monthermer avow that even in Italy he had seen nothing so attractive, so venerable, so refreshing, as that unpretending woodland scene. They were glad to find that his taste was not *thoroughly* corrupted; that the interests of home were still potent over his feelings.

Instead of withdrawing, according to their custom at the close of dessert, to the neighbouring saloon, Emma and aunt Margaret were about to step from the dining-room to the lawn, when the searching eyes of the latter, suddenly directed from the threshold towards the long line of carriage-road winding through the domain, discerned that a carriage had entered the park.

"Some neighbourly visit!" was the conclusion of the rest of the circle; and on any other evening of the year, such an incident at such an hour would have been felt a tiresome interruption. But even Mrs. De Ligne's insignificant

rattle must afford relief to their embarrassment; and Monthermer, who had been cogitating, a moment before, upon the possibility of anticipating his departure for the castle, now congratulated himself on being spared the necessity of an ungracious measure. Mrs. De Ligne would supply conversation for the whole party.

It cannot be the De Lignes, aunt Emma," observed little Harry, whose eyes were clearer than the rest. " Mrs. De Ligne would not have postilions."

" What family drives with postilions in the neighbourhood?" inquired Hamilton.

" No one, that I recollect," answered aunt Margaret.

" It is *not* a gentleman's postilion," observed Harry, stoutly, — " I can see the postboys' hats."

And after a few idle conjectures, and a few minutes to elucidate their absurdity, all could

perceive that the mysterious vehicle was a britszka with posthorses, the calash being so closely drawn down as a screen from the intensity of the setting sun, that the travellers were at present undiscernible.

Who could it possibly be?—No one expected any one!—It was at last the children who suggested with the discursive flightiness of children; "If it should be *my uncle Gerald!*"

"My dear Mary, your uncle Gerald is two thousand miles off!"—was aunt Emma's reply.

"Yes, I know!—But if it *should* happen to be my uncle, how glad we *should* all be!"

Aunt Emma patted her on the head approvingly, and remonstrated *dis*approvingly on the indulgence of such wild imaginations; — and persuaded that they were about to welcome some distant kinsman or acquaintance — some acquaintance who, finding himself in the course of a summer tour within distance

of the Hall, chose to claim a night's hospitality, they hurried for decorum's sake into the drawing-room, for the ceremony of reception. Still, the children remained on the watch; and a minute afterwards, little Mary, breathless and with a crimson face, ran in exclaiming, "Aunt Emma—they are lifting a gentleman out of the carriage;—I almost think—I am almost afraid —it is *really* my uncle Gerald!"

In spite of her high moral courage, Emma Wroughton at this announcement was seized with so universal a trembling as to prevent her stirring a step.—Hamilton, obeying the direction of her eyes, instantly moved towards the hall; while a sort of sickly presentiment seemed to render Lord Monthermer as incapable of motion as his agitated sister-in-law.

The doors of the apartment were thrown open just as his lordship and Aunt Margaret hurried forward to follow the steps of Hamilton;

but a warning movement of the head from the confidential servant by whom, in conjunction with Basil, the wasted form of Gerald was borne into the room and deposited on the sofa, admonished them not to crowd round him. Exhausted by fatigue and emotion, the invalid was in a half-fainting state; it was only by the aid of strong stimulants, he was restored to consciousness. At the expiration of twenty minutes, poor Emma, still kneeling beside the sofa, felt a slight movement in the cold, wasted hand she was chafing within her own; and at length, a slight pressure assured her that the precious brother who seemed to have returned home only to die in the midst of those he loved, was restored to them for a time.

The servant by whom he was accompanied, was now drawn out of the room by Aunt Margaret, to confirm her worst apprehensions. There was no hope! The physicians—both

English and foreign—owned that there was no hope. They had assured Mr. Wroughton that the hurried journey he had suddenly undertaken to England, would only accelerate the fatal moment. Yet he had persevered in his intentions. He would hear no remonstrances. When repeatedly seized with fainting-fits on the road, and implored by his attendant to take rest,—he replied only by hastening the resumption of their journey. "I may be yet in time!" burst continually from his parched lips,—the sole indication of a definite purpose in his enterprise.

"But why not write,—why not prepare us!" exclaimed the terrified old lady, wringing her hands in despair.

"I had my master's express orders to the contrary, madam. Throughout this attack, which has lasted since spring, Mr. Wroughton's chief anxiety has been to prevent news of his condition from reaching England."

Hurrying back on tiptoe into the drawing-room, the old lady drew towards the sofa, in time to overhear the hoarse whispers of her nephew, addressed in broken accents to his sister.

"Yes, darling Emma, you may well be ashamed of me!" said he. "Is it not disgraceful for a man,—a strong man,—a reasonable being,—to be so influenced,—so hatefully,—fatally influenced? No matter—let us save *him*, if we can,—for the children's sake, let us endeavour to save *him*.—But where is Hamilton, Emma?—I fancied just now I caught a glimpse of Hamilton?—How comes he here?—What is Basil doing at Wroughton?"

And Basil came at his call; and, kneeling down, pressed the cold, moist hand extended towards him to his throbbing heart; for Hamilton had looked too often on the dying, not to discern the approach of death on the countenance of his friend.

"Have you not received my letters?" inquired Emma. "Have you had no announcement of our intended marriage?"

"I have had no letters these five weeks. The last I received was from Helmsley. I left Constantinople the following day.—Your marriage?—your intended marriage?—and with Hamilton? My Emma! this is a consolation little looked for! Bless you,—bless you both! *You* at least will be happy!"

"Do not allow him to talk and agitate himself thus!" interposed Aunt Margaret. "Gerald, my dear boy, be persuaded to retire to your own cool, quiet room, and try to sleep. You want rest — you only want rest."

"I shall not want it *long!*" faintly escaped the lips of the sufferer; "and I am come so far to enjoy what I am now enjoying!"—

And he lifted his mild, expressive eyes to the affectionate faces by which he was surrounded, with a look of love and intercommunion such as the approach of death renders so painfully intense.

But among those faces, that of Lord Monthermer was no longer visible. Overpowered by emotion—by apprehension of coming evil—he had hastened from the room. The hot and weary servants of the traveller were still in the hall, surrounded by those of the household, mingling tears and lamentations with their inquiries into their young master's condition. Monthermer rushed hurriedly past. The old housekeeper was exclaiming as he appeared, that "poor dear Master Gerald was going to follow Miss Marcella to the grave!"—and the conscious looks of the group when they discerned his lordship's presence, were easily

interpreted into looks of condemnation and reproach. He fancied they reviled him as the cause of Gerald Wroughton's early death. Some enemy had brought his brother down to an untimely grave!—His conscience supplied the accusation of "Thou art the man!"

CHAPTER XI.

Che poria mai, pur con parole sciolte,
Dicer del sangue e delle piaghe interne
Ch'i 'ora vidi?

DANTE.

ON the morrow, Gerald was announced to be better;—that is, he was less agitated,—more exhausted. The medical attendants of the family, without giving hope of his ultimate recovery, afforded some comfort to the afflicted Emma, by announcing that the present crisis was one of nervous excitement rather than a development of his insidious malady; assuring

her that no immediate danger was to be apprehended. Extreme quiet in the bosom of his attentive family, would perhaps remove the pernicious consequences of a hasty journey at so exciting a season of the year. Miss Wroughton's hint that the agitation and excitement were from within, and that exterior causes had probably benefited rather than injured the invalid, was answered only by a repetition of "the more occasion for quiet.—Avoid all agitating topics of conversation. The tranquillity of home, and the influence of natal air, may effect wonders."

Emma smiled her mournful thanks for this assurance; but she remembered Marcella. She felt that if tranquillity of soul could suffice to arrest the progress of the destroyer, her sister must have been spared. Nevertheless, it was her duty to impart what she had heard to Lord Monthermer. Persuaded that an explanation

with his brother-in-law was the ultimate object of Gerald's journey, she implored him to avoid every occasion of being alone with the invalid.

"Why should you imagine that he has any thing important to communicate to me?"—inquired Monthermer. But, in spite of his lordship's assumed composure, there was no disguising the tremour of his voice or the quivering of his lips with which the inquiry was spoken. He was completely unhinged. The countenance of Gerald Wroughton in its present state, recalled so vividly the face of his dying wife, that a thousand agonizing reminiscences were rekindled in his mind. Bitter memories of the past, as well as vague terrors for the future, sat heavy on his soul.

"I do not *imagine* it,—I *know* it!"—replied Emma. "The few broken sentences in which last night he alluded to his return and its motives, convince me—(pardon me, it is a moment

to speak plainly,) that Gerald is dying a victim to his miserable attachment; and that he cannot expire in peace till he has confided to you the secret of his sufferings,—perhaps of his wrongs."

"In that case," said Monthermer, pale with conflicting emotions,—"it will be better for me this moment to leave the house. I can listen to nothing, I *will* listen to nothing, even from Gerald, detrimental to *her*."

"Leave us?—at such a moment?"—cried Emma, scarcely repressing her indignation.—"Is the influence of such a woman, then, so fatal to every generous impulse, that your nature is already thus changed? Would you abandon my brother, who, at the risk of his few remaining hours, has travelled so many hundred miles to see you and do you service?—Gracious Heavens!—is it the husband of my dear Marcella, who evinces so little con-

sideration for those who were dear to her,—those to whom she made him dear!"

Miss Wroughton burst from the room to hide her indignant tears, as she uttered these words of unusual bitterness; but it was a comfort to her to learn, when, an hour or two afterwards she inquired for Lord Monthermer, that he had not yet quitted the house. It was a still greater comfort to know that Gerald, after his interview with the physicians, had retained Basil Hamilton by his bedside. The gentle assuagement of Hamilton's manners, and the soothing consolation of his doctrines, must afford a healing balm to the wounded soul of her brother.

But on this point, her expectations were premature. Hamilton was not one of those ministers of the gospel who consider it a professional duty to *force* religious arguments upon the consideration of persons who have led the

life and cherished the convictions of his young friend. He felt that were Gerald so minded, he would propose the topic; but instead of alluding to his own situation, the invalid pointedly directed the conversation to the prospects of his sister; signifying his unqualified delight in her choice, and affectionately reproaching Hamilton for having so long delayed their mutual happiness by the scrupulosity of his delicacy.

"If we had been poor, I grant you!" faltered Wroughton, with a heavy smile. "But wealth is the last thing wanting to *us!* The cloud that is over my destinies does not proceed from any cause so wholesome as deficiency of money."

On this hint, Basil Hamilton spake. He chose to see no cloud. He protested that all was sunshine, in hopes of leading the sufferer to a full admission of his troubles. But concerning

the origin of his grief, Gerald was silent. He only admitted in a paroxysm of feeling such as, with all his experience, the young pastor had never seen burst from the human breast, that his heart was broken by much anguish. It was in vain that Hamilton profited by the occasion to offer him the solace of that peace, whose consolations are beyond the consolations of this world. "Not *yet!*" was Gerald's interdiction, in reply. "I am still too much engrossed by the cares of life! I have a load upon my spirit, of which it must first be disemburdened. Hereafter, my dear friend,—my dear *brother!*—We will talk of this *hereafter.*"

His first object was to attain strength and composure for his purposed interview with Monthermer. To his brother-in-law's request for admittance into his chamber, he replied that he should be dressed and among them in

an hour or two;—and at the appointed time, he was assisted into the morning-room, and placed in its easiest chair and shadiest nook. Flushed by the agitation of the moment, the invalid was universally congratulated on the amendment perceptible in his appearance; while aunt Margaret was sanguine enough to protest that "he looked quite himself again;—that a month at Wroughton would completely set him up!"

"Weak as I may seem, I have already been exercising my authority as master of the family," observed Gerald, cheerfully,—evading a direct reply to her remark; "by insisting that Emma and Hamilton oblige me by cutting short the usual formalities and delays of courtship; and affording me the best restorative, the sight of a wedding in the family. Next week, I am to give my sister to my friend."—

He looked hard at Monthermer (who coloured

deeply at the allusion), as if desirous to add more; but unluckily at that moment, the door was carefully opened by the butler, to announce that Mrs. and Miss De Ligne were in the drawing-room.

"Pray go to them, my dear aunt," said Emma.—"Announce Gerald's unexpected arrival, and explain to them that I cannot leave him."

"Mrs. De Ligne and Mary?"—inquired the invalid, with an air of interest,—"Why not receive them here?"—

"The agitation of seeing strangers,"—Emma began—

"Of seeing *strangers?*" was Gerald's deeply-felt rejoinder. "What agitation can arise from seeing strangers?—It is those who are nearest and dearest to us, whose presence is alone capable of calling forth emotion."

The visitors, who had come for purposes of

congratulation to Emma, wholly unprepared for tidings of Wroughton's arrival, were now introduced; but the moment they entered the room, Emma repented her acquiescence in her brother's proposal. The hysterical sobs that heaved the bosom of poor Mary at sight of his condition, seemed as if expressly purposed to reveal to the sufferer the havoc effected in his appearance by the progress of disease. But on this head, Gerald had nothing to learn; and the sympathy of the kind-hearted girl, of whom he knew nothing as an Almack's beauty, and still regarded as a *child*,—a *neighbour's* child,—gratified and soothed his feelings.

"My dear Mary," said he (addressing her as she had ceased to be addressed by all men living but her father)—"don't let my scarecrow face frighten away the sunshine from your face. I am come from the country of plague and pestilence, to see what your wholesome North-

amptonshire air will do for me. I shall be discouraged in the onset, if I find myself so alarming.—Come and sit beside me here, Mary, and tell me all you have been doing during my absence.—How go on the chalks and the piano?—And have you made any acquisition of old china for the pet dairy?—I collected you some rubbish at Naples, from the Caserta manufactory; and Lord Monthermer was to have brought them home for you, but in the hurry of his unexpected departure," added Gerald, perceiving by Mrs. De Ligne's look of surprise that his offering had never reached High Grove, —" no doubt they were forgotten, and are at this moment ornamenting the chimney of our Italian courier's wife."

While all this was saying, and the effort was long and laborious, Mary's tears poured down like rain; but she neither attempted to raise her head nor to utter a syllable. She knew

that she was exposing her weakness of nature; little suspecting that weakness to be what is called "love,"—a word erased by the governess from her lesson-books,—and designated by the duchess her godmamma as gross and disgraceful.

Meanwhile, by the time the conclusion of Gerald's address enabled her to recover herself, Mrs. De Ligne had completed *her* dissertation to aunt Margaret and Emma, on the hazards entailed by the English atmosphere on persons, declimatized for any length of time in foreign countries; and was ready to begin it all over again to Gerald, dwelling upon the danger of evening dews and morning fogs, as if they had never been heard of until the signal discovery made by her own favourite apothecary, that "the insular position of England, rendered it peculiarly susceptible of atmospheric change."—

Every one present thanked her at heart; and who, among those who were *not* present, but has been at some moment or other, conscious of the advantage of a prosy narrative neighbour, to fill up the pauses of a conversation interrupted by the delicacies or sensibilities of an embarrassed party!

All was going off admirably. Mary began to recover her self-possession, and Mrs. Wroughton to contemplate the happy interruption of luncheon which was to take them to the dining-room and leave Gerald to himself; when unluckily, Lord Monthermer quitted the room to issue counter-orders to his servants respecting their preparations for departure. Instantly did Mrs. De Ligne profit by the opportunity to inquire whether the news brought from London by Mary were correct; and how soon she might congratulate them

upon his lordship's nuptials with Lady Adelaide de Vere.

Vain had it been for Emma or Mrs. Wroughton to attempt admonishment, either by the coldness of their countenance or the coldness of their reply. They knew by old experience that Mrs. De Ligne was an unsilenceable person, assigning importance to no single human feeling except the physical ailments of her husband and children; and it did not surprise poor Emma when her own remark of "Perhaps you will excuse our entering into the subject; —it is one which you may well imagine cannot be very acceptable to *us*,"—was parried with— "To be sure not,—poor dear!—De Ligne and I were saying, only last night, how very trying it must be to *you* to see any one usurp poor Lady Helmsley's place. And after all, perhaps Mary, young as she is, might have been

more welcome in the family than such a woman as—"

"My dear Mrs. De Ligne!" remonstrated Emma, glancing towards the ghastly countenance of Gerald, and feeling that interference was absolutely necessary. "It is too late for us to hear this now.—Be generous enough to impute our silence on such a point to respect for the memory of my sister."

"To be sure I will!"—was the hearty rejoinder of the well-intentioned squiress;—"for as I was saying to De Ligne only last night, after all, if so vile a creature *is* to have the care of those two poor babes, it is at least a comfort that the Hamiltons will be at hand to see justice done them."

Emma Wroughton resigned herself to the martyrdom inflicted by her misjudging neighbour; but while she dreaded to indicate by the slightest show of sympathy her consciousness

of Gerald's sufferings, Mary De Ligne, enlightened by the instinct which true affection imparts, even to the simplest nature, leant forward to conceal his agonized countenance from the observation of her mother. In gentle silence, she drew back the door of the French window near which his couch was placed, so as to admit a freer current of air,—and placed the vinaigrette in his hand which had fallen by his side.—She thought for him,—for with him she felt.—A single glance revealed all this to Emma; and the swollen eyelids and compressed lips of the kind girl, added a world of commentary to the text. Poor Mary De Ligne,—poor little mild simple Mary!—Another victim to be added to the list of sufferers from the manœuvres of Lady Adelaide de Vere!

"I'm afraid we're sadly in the way," said Mrs. De Ligne, rising fussily to depart, the

moment Lord Monthermer's return to the room rendered her stay an object of desire. "I believe we'd better be moving.—Good bye, my dear Mr. Wroughton,—I hope to have better accounts of you to-morrow.—You must try to get up your strength and spirits to dance at the double wedding in the family. Such things don't happen every day. I assure you, we shall expect fine doings at the Hall;—shan't we, Mary?—I'm glad you came down, my dear, in time to enjoy them. The duchess wanted to carry her off to Harrogate," she continued, shaking hands at parting with Mrs. Margaret. "But I wrote word that her father and I couldn't do without her in the boys' holidays. Besides, what should a girl of *her* complexion want with Harrogate?—very well for the duchess, who has had the erysipelas these ten years,—but quite superfluous for Mary."

Mary's complexion, however, was a thing at

that moment little to be commended. With a face alternately crimson and pale as death, her steps fell like lead as she followed her mother out of a house she had entered with so light a heart, and was not likely to enter again till the lightness of that heart was gone for ever!—The poor girl sank despairingly into a corner of the carriage, while her mother gave a loose current to her thoughts.

"Well! if ever I beheld so miserable a wreck!" ejaculated Mrs. De Ligne, lifting up her hands.—"Such a fine young man as he was only two years ago;—and now I'm much mistaken if he has a week to live! They ought to have advice down from town.—With *his* fortune, they certainly ought to have the best advice down from town.—Poor Gerald!—Of poor old Mr. Wroughton's fine family, there will soon be only Emma remaining. What a catch for that Mr. Hamilton! (for I suppose she will eventually

inherit the whole of the property!) To be sure what a dreadful thing to reflect that perhaps within a week from this, a funeral will be taking this very road!—Poor Gerald! —I dare say if his illness had been taken in time—By the way, Mary, dear, I wonder whether Smith has seen poor little Richard's foot to-day?—That was an ugly cut!—They may say what they please,—but it was a *very* ugly cut. I have heard of a locked-jaw from an accident much less important. Remind me the next time Smith calls, to see it dressed myself. Don't shudder so, my dear Mary. You must learn not to be fainthearted about these sort of sights.—Nothing so troublesome as a woman whose nerves are too delicate for the wear and tear of life. You may come to have a family of your own, my dear, when your presence of mind will be in constant request. I shall insist on your being present when Smith dresses Richard's foot, to get you into habits of

usefulness. You must not fancy, Mary, that things are to be always as you have been seeing them at the duchess's ; there is a paper of Mrs. Barbauld's in "Evenings at Home," which will show you the value of presence of mind. I heard little Sophy reading it to Miss Sadler the other day. It would not hurt *you*, Mary, if you was sometimes to look into the schoolroom of a morning and profit by what is going on."

For half an hour longer, did Mrs. De Ligne wind on her ball of cotton; and thankful was poor Mary that it spared her all necessity for reply!—The tender nature of the poor girl was charged with tears.—She had scarcely fortitude to bear up, unconfessing, against her sorrow. But to such a mother, how could she confess? —Mrs. De Ligne had not a grain of sympathy for wounds that derived no aid from lint, cerate, and Mr. Smith!

The afflicted girl could almost fancy, as she

gazed steadily from the carriage to conceal her tears, that a peculiar mournfulness was in the aspect and atmosphere of the Hall. There was an unnatural stillness in the air. The old house looked grayer and calmer than usual. Mary, who had approached it with indifference, now imagined that she discerned in all around her, death-tokens for Gerald Wroughton,—for her companion,—her playmate, her kind considerate friend!—He, who but now had called her "Mary," in the tenderest—the most brotherly tone;—he, of whom her mother kept assuring her, that in a week, a hearse containing his senseless remains would traverse that very spot!—

While such were the sorrows of Mary De Ligne, mild as those silent showers of early spring that fall unheard upon the grass, a struggle of far deeper emotions was gathering in the bosom of him for whom she mourned. En-

lightened by the incautious remarks of his High Grove neighbour, Gerald had already begged to be left alone with Monthermer,—had entreated his brother-in-law to draw near,—taken his unresisting hand,—implored him to listen with patience,—and proceeded to unfold his bitter story of injury and woe. But at the mere mention of Lady Adelaide's name, Lord Monthermer burst forth into remonstrance.

"It is impossible that I can hear you!" cried he, "I appeal to yourself, my dear Gerald, whether I am justified in giving ear to accusations against my affianced wife?—Answer me as a man of honour; not as a man distracted by the peevishness of jealousy!"

"I am *not* distracted by jealousy," replied Wroughton, with mild serenity,—"I am only disabused from all scruples of worldly wisdom by a near approach to the stern realities of death. Seeing things as I do in the revealing

light of truth, I tremble at the prospect of leaving the happiness of my sister's children in the grasp of one devoid of every principle or feeling of humanity."

"I entreat you, spare me this!" — cried Monthermer, starting up.

"No!"—replied Gerald, extending his thin feeble hand towards his companion, — "you must sit down and bear with me awhile.—It is nearly the last request I shall have to make you;—it is nearly the last day my voice will be among you. I die young, my dear Monthermer. My task has been a thriftless one. Few are the good deeds that will mark in this world a trace of my career. — Let me confer *one* benefit before I go hence.—Let me labour to secure your peace of mind from the rock where *mine* has suffered shipwreck!—I ask it in the name of my happy childhood,—I ask it in memory of my beloved sister!"

Thus adjured, Lord Monthermer constrained himself to resume his seat. But he hardened his heart while he obeyed. Not to listen was impossible; — not to *believe*, he was firmly resolved.

Yet how to withhold his faith when the mild broken voice of Gerald sounded in his ears,— that voice which, even in sport, he had never heard utter an untruth!—The accusations it conveyed were spoken in no exacerbation of spirit. — He simply alluded to the blandishments with which he had been courted to Lord Colebrooke's house, to the flatteries lavished on him, the tokens of affection; and as he pursued his patient narrative, Lord Monthermer's personal experience afforded painful confirmation that the siren's modes of fascination were habitual.

"Till the day of your quitting Naples," continued Gerald, wiping the cold dews from

his forehead,—" I received constant assurances of her attachment. Nothing but the formality of acceptance by her father was wanting to the ratification of our engagement.—She knew that a lock of her hair was treasured next my heart:—I now resign it to you, Monthermer, that you may restore it to her after my release from all earthly passions,—all human engagements!—She knew that her letters were valued as my dearest of earthly possessions; —containing as they did such assurances of tenderness as one less inexperienced than myself in the hypocrisies of life, might have received as *I* did with respect,—with gratitude, —with rapture.—These also, my dear friend, restore to her in my name;—and, having once seen them in your hands, Lady Adelaide de Vere will know that any future union between you becomes impossible."

" I will execute the commissions with which

you see fit to intrust me," said Monthermer, when the pause occasioned by Gerald's physical exhaustion seemed to demand a reply; "but do not expect me to pledge myself by promises, till I have heard her vindication.—My honour is too deeply involved to admit of withdrawing from my engagements without positive proof of unworthiness.—Admitting all your charges, to what do they amount?—That she encouraged your addresses,—accepted the offering of your affections,—and bestowed a lock of her hair on him upon whom she intended to bestow her hand!—A more intimate acquaintance, it seems, convinced her that such a marriage would be fatal to the happiness of both, and she withdrew her consent!—She was wise enough to know that a greater injury would be inflicted on you by an ill-assorted marriage, than by a momentary disappointment; and if sufficiently confident in your honour to leave

unclaimed in your hands the tokens of former regard, entertained little apprehension that they would be made instrumental in the destruction of her future happiness!"

"The reproach touches me not," replied Wroughton. "The gifts and letters of Lady Adelaide de Vere remained in my hands only because I resisted her attempts, backed by the insolence of Lord Portumna, to recall them to her possession. I told her I would resign them but with my life. Misunderstanding my declaration, her lover did not persevere in his demand at the risk of his own; and *now* I fulfil my promise,—for with my life I am about to resign them!"

"Her lover?" cried Monthermer with a start.—"Would you infer that Lord Portumna is attached to Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—

"Not sufficiently so, at least, to make her his *wife*.—It was by him I was suggested to her as

a weak willing husband,—a husband to be duped and wronged,—a husband whose fortune would defray her debts, and whose hand establish her position in the eyes of the world."

"You admit, then, that Adelaide's feelings had at no time any influence in her engagement with you?" demanded the infatuated Monthermer.

"I admit that in accepting me, she acted wholly under the influence of Portumna; and I assert that it was also *his* worldly wisdom which, on your accession of fortune, determined her to break with *me* and direct her arts of attraction towards yourself.—I ask you in all candour, Monthermer, till that fatal ball, had you the slightest reason to doubt her regard for myself or suspect her preference?"

Monthermer was silent.

"By Lord Portumna was the news of Lord Shropshire's death communicated to her, before

it reached his heir.—Such was the honourable prompting which suggested her conduct that night!—What it has since been, your observations can best determine. But enough!—I have done my duty, even at the risk of estranging your goodwill at a period when I can little afford to part with the sustaining affection of a friend.—My peace of conscience, dear Monthermer, must recompense me for all I am losing in your regard!"

"Bear with me!"—replied Lord Monthermer, extending his hand towards Gerald after a pause of deep emotion.—"None better than yourself can estimate the difficulty of dismissing from the heart a deeply-cherished affection.—You know the power of this woman.—Bear with me!"

That the subject so painful in discussion might be dismissed for ever from their consideration, Mr. Wroughton persisted, however,

in depositing at once in the hands of Monthermer, the pledges to which he had alluded. The interview had been to him as the crisis of a frightful malady. No sooner was he left to himself, than the patient sank into an absorbing sleep;—a sleep from which wonders were prognosticated by his friends.

But when, towards evening, Gerald awoke from the almost unnatural slumbers into which he had fallen, it was plain that the repose vouchsafed him had induced no happy effect upon his system.

The clearsighted Emma perceived at once that the previous purpose which she had supposed to exercise an evil influence over his health, had acted as a stimulus and sustainment. He awoke more languid,—more exhausted,—more haggard. His mind seemed almost bewildered by the powerful dreams by which he had been visited. In certain periods

of disease, dreams attain the force of delirium; till it becomes nearly impossible for the sufferer to distinguish between his waking perceptions and the illusions of slumber.

"Where is she!"—cried Gerald, starting from the sofa, and seizing the arm of his sister, who sat watching silently beside him in the stillness and obscurity of twilight.

"No one has been here, my dearest Gerald."

"You did not hear the cruel taunts with which just now she answered my reproaches?"

"No one has been with us this day, but poor little Mary De Ligne,—who is incapable of a contemptuous word or thought."

"Poor Mary!—No—I was not thinking of Mary.—I have been dreaming,—I have been dreaming of *her*.—I fancied I saw her in all her pride and splendour,—prouder more splendid than I had ever seen her yet. She was on her way to be married.—She was crossing a church-

yard full of graves;—and I seized her beautiful arm and upbraided her with the evil of her life, —of the destinies she had blighted,—the feelings she had outraged.—Emma!—you do not know her!—or you would appreciate the malignant plausibility of tone with which she uttered some commonplace pleasantry in reply!—There was a time when I was fascinated by the combination of simplicity and archness of sallies of hers,—spoken with such sweetness, such playfulness, — yet masking such consummate art!—But just now, I could have fancied it was the Evil one himself breathing through her beautiful lips! — That a shallow mask of amiability should suffice to disguise the hateful purposes of guile and guilt!—"

The sufferer spoke so wildly and incoherently, that Emma trembled for his reason. "But

this was only a dream!" said she, in a mild tone of remonstrance.

"Yes,—only a dream!—But who can say where the dream of our soul begins, or its perceptions end?—I thought in my dream she was beside me, as firmly as I conceive *you* to be beside me *now!*"

"But you did not feel her hand clasped in yours, with a pressure true and intimate as this?"—persisted Miss Wroughton,—trying to lead back his mind to reason.

"Dearest sister—I *know* that I am awake now,—and I *feel* that you are beside me," replied Wroughton, affectionately embracing her, and making an effort to surmount the mental delusions of which he was becoming gradually conscious. "But you can little imagine how perplexing it is to feel shattered in mind as I have been lately feeling! — Infirmity of

body, one bears with greater patience. For *that* one can suggest remedies, or adopt them when suggested; but for this decay of faculty,—Oh! Emma,—Emma!"

He pressed his sister's hand to his burning forehead as he spoke; and as Miss Wroughton was drawn nearer to him by the contact, it was easy to whisper,—"Even for *that*, Hamilton could suggest a remedy!—Listen to *his* words of consolation:—lean upon the support they will impart!"

"*I cannot!*"—was the desponding answer of the unhappy man.—"I shall, perhaps, accuse her too harshly in saying that this woman's influence has depraved my mind. But true it is, that since I resigned to her control my hopes and aspirations, I have been unable to estrange myself from the vanities of life. Emma!—she pursues me to the grave,—she forbids me to die in peace!"

To a frame of mind thus distracted, poor Emma felt unequal to afford relief.

"Fear nothing!" was Basil Hamilton's reply, when she confided to him the state of her brother's feelings. "Such a condition as you describe (in a great measure the result of disease), has too often fallen under my observation. It is with such difficulties we are appointed to wrestle. Not amid the calm of summer weather is the service of the pilot a thing of need;—but when the storm is darkest and the prospect dreariest, then doth the perishing man turn with hope and gratitude to the anchor of his salvation."

"He will turn when it is too late!" cried Emma, in deep despondency. "A single topic engrosses every thought and every feeling. The interview of this morning ought to have subdued the irritation of his mind. Yet even now, the slightest movement of

Monthermer interests him more than our own earnest adjurations.—The moment Monthermer quits the room, my brother makes hurried inquiries whether he is preparing to quit Wroughton,—whether he is likely to return to town,—whether he has been engaged in writing letters!—Though the name of Lady Adelaide is never pronounced, I can perceive that every word uttered by poor Gerald bears remote reference to her or hers."

Nor was the kind sister deceived. So sedulously as she watched every movement of Gerald, did Gerald for several succeeding days examine the expression of Lord Monthermer's countenance, and search out the meaning of his words. It had been solemnly agreed between the brothers that the one loved name, the name both loved and loathed, should never be hazarded between them again. But now that the promise was given, Gerald repented of

his pledge. He burned with the feverish anxiety of sickness to ascertain the determination taken by his brother. He longed to know whether Monthermer had written; or whether Lady Adelaide herself had not been moved to inquire the cause of his delay.

But such was Lord Monthermer's self-command, that not a syllable transpired of his intentions. He neither ate, nor drank, nor rested; but *who* among those at Wroughton Hall could enjoy either food or sleep, with the spectacle of the unfortunate Gerald's rapid decline continually before their eyes? Was it to be expected that Lord Monthermer should evince less sympathy in his condition than the mere neighbourly acquaintances, who every day despatched messages of inquiry touching the progress of the invalid?—

CHAPTER XII.

Sad doom,—at sorrow's shrine to kneel,
For ever covetous to feel,
And impotent to bear;
Such once was his—to think and think
On blighted love, and only sink
From anguish to despair!
But nature with benignant part,
Hath in the silence of his heart,
To faith a cradle given;
Calm as the dewdrop, free to rest
Within the rose's tranquil breast
Till it exhales to heaven.

WORDSWORTH.

DETAILS of the affecting struggles of a departing soul, labouring to abstract itself from the interests of life and subdue its worldly

pride to a frame of humility becoming its mortal degradation, however edifying, however touching, may not with propriety be introduced into volumes tinged like these with the levity of the passing time.—It is true that the merely frivolous reader is sometimes advantageously startled by lessons which, elsewhere than in the light pages of fiction, would never meet his eye. But there are readers profane as well as frivolous; and in the temple of folly, which professedly courts the approach of the vain and trivial, no sacred image should be enshrined to incur the hazard of desecration!—

A month, a painful month of ebbing strength and mental irritation, elapsed for the young sufferer at Wroughton Hall; and life was still vouchsafed him, to linger and to learn. For he *did* learn! Though the incident which eventually served to detach his thoughts from the grovelling interests of life, was one of an

humiliating nature, it becomes us not to contest the means by which the benefits of Providence are administered to the wants of its creatures.

It was after an unaccountable absence of many days from the Hall, that Lord Monthermer suddenly returned, to reciprocate the former request of Gerald for a private interview. What passed between them on the occasion, did not transpire to the family; but from that moment, confidence was manifestly restored between the brothers. The cares which had hitherto contracted the brow of the dying man, now seemed transferred to that of Monthermer. Hope had descended upon the one, while despair overcame the other. But the hope vouchsafed to Gerald Wroughton was a rainbow sealing the covenant of his eternal happiness; while the despair overwhelming the mind of Monthermer, haunted him with the mingled bitterness of repentance and remorse.

In the bosom of his friend Hamilton, did poor Wroughton deposit his confessions of past error, and receive in return the palms of immortal peace; but it was in gloomy solitude that Monthermer strove to atone his former infatuation,—his faithlessness to the memory of the dead.

The world meanwhile took ample share in the distresses of the afflicted family.

"I'm sure my dear ma'am, there isn't a soul in the county but what experiences the truest interest in poor Mr. Wroughton's situation," observed Mrs. De Ligne to his venerable aunt, one morning, after having contrived to overcome the scruples of the old butler against granting her admittance. "As to my daughter Mary, (as Smith was considerately observing to me this morning,) if our young friend at the Hall should hold out much longer, I am convinced the poor child will fret herself into

a very serious way !—Nothing I could say or do, would induce her to accompany me hither to-day; yet she will never take her eyes off the lodge-gates at High Grove till the carriage enters them again. There is no getting her out of the house. I had a letter from my cousin, the duchess, yesterday, inviting my daughter to pass September with her, after her return from Harrogate; and they are to have battues and archery, and a regular London party staying in the house;—Lord Royston and that gay foreign count (who don't signify much as he's not a marrying man); and young Harford the great fortune, who has lately come into a hundred thousand a-year. But Mary won't hear of going.—I'm sure I don't know what to make of her !"

"If my nephew's death is to restore her to health," observed Mrs. Margaret, stiffly, somewhat moved by the unconscious egotism of her

neighbour, "Miss De Ligne has not long to suffer.—Gerald has passed a wretched night. Mr. Hamilton sat up with him. It is our only comfort that he will no longer bear Basil Hamilton out of his sight. All we think of is the alleviation of his sufferings. His restoration, alas! is beyond the reach of mortal aid."

"It must be a sad thing for Mr. Hamilton, to have such a trying duty fall upon him, just at this happy period of his life," said Mrs. De Ligne, compassionately. "And by the way, I wonder what Lady Adelaide says to Lord Monthermer's courage, in not so much as running to town for a day to inspect the preparations for their marriage?"—

"On that point, my dear madam, undeceive yourself," replied the old aunt resuming her dignity and her spectacles. "I am happy to inform you that there is not the slightest

foundation for the report with which you favoured us on the subject."

"Come now—my dear Mrs. Wroughton!—between friends, too—between such old friends!—Do you *really* persist that his lordship is not engaged to Lady Adelaide?" cried the astonished Mrs. De Ligne.

"No more than to your own daughter."

"Lord of mercy!—how happy I am to hear it!—I really *must* congratulate him *now*."

"Unfortunately he does not return till to-night from Delaval Castle," observed Mrs. Wroughton.

"You don't mean that he absents himself from the Hall at such a moment as this?"

"He quitted us only yesterday.—But I must now wish you good morning. It is the hour that Emma and I take our turn with Hamilton in the sick-room."

Experience had rendered Mrs. Wroughton

cautious of exposing herself to the cross-examination of her gossiping neighbour. Satisfied with disseminating by her means through the county the welcome report that no marriage was to take place between the widowed husband of Marcella and the daughter of the Earl of Colebrooke, she did not consider it necessary to pour into the sieve of her neighbour's mind, the knowledge that his lordship's name was added to the list of victims of Lady Adelaide de Vere. The good aunt was herself imperfectly versed in the details of the case. She knew vaguely from Emma that Lord Monthermer had addressed the proud beauty in terms of remonstrance and reproof; and received in return a cold expression of surprise at the liberty taken, and regret that it must preclude all further acquaintance between the families. But even Emma knew not all. Even to *her*—even to Gerald,—Lord Monthermer

had not found courage to confide the true terms of a communication fully justifying the accusations of his brother-in-law.

The calm, well-bred, well-affected surprise expressed by Lady Adelaide at his blindness in "not discovering at their last interview the determination she had taken to decline a nearer engagement with one whom she found herself unable to requite with the affection indispensable to so solemn a contract," might have been mistaken for truth, had not Gerald's previous experience led him to see through the flimsy folds of such bitter irony.—That she chose to anticipate his withdrawal, a withdrawal which honour alone had forbidden him to attempt, was sufficiently plain. But this, he fancied, afforded at least proof of her disinterestedness. She might have clung to the engagement;—she might have asserted her

claims. Her cold dignified rejection restored her in some degree to his esteem.

"Do not deceive yourself!—She is incapable of a generous thought or action!" was Gerald's commentary on this implied commendation. "The sequel will doubtless prove that in this, as in all else, she is actuated by the cold-blooded foresight of a woman of the world."

From that eventful moment all was peace with Gerald Wroughton. In compliance with his earnest wishes, the marriage of his sister and friend was solemnized in his presence. He ministered with deliberate justice to the disposal of his worldly affairs. He committed the tenantry over whom he had never yet assumed a master's jurisdiction, to the hands of the young couple, henceforward fated to represent in the county the time-honoured name of Wroughton; and assigned to his

afflicted household a liberal memento of one whose boyhood had been so dear to them,—whose age was to be endeared to none !—

As the pangs of his infirmity fell heavier upon his sinking frame, those of his spirit were wholly subdued. The parting soul like the setting sun casts every shadow behind. Before the dying man, lay a path of splendour hope and joy !—Smiles of affection and charity brightened his deathbed ;—smiles of hope and faith, his early grave !—There was no bitterness in the tears that sanctified the memory of Gerald Wroughton !—

CHAPTER XIII.

Caquet-bon-bec alors de jaser au plus dru
Sur ceci, sur cela, sur tout.

LAFONTAINE.

"IN what immense style the Harfords are throwing off!"—observed Lord Royston to Lord Loxley, at one of the first dinners given the following spring, by the Duchess of Havering. "I understand nothing was ever so splendid as her appearance the other night at the private ball at the Tuileries!"

"A *parure* of diamonds and sapphires, vich shame the sryne at Loretto!"—exclaimed Flaszaski.

"I am told, Sir Harry Harford has sent over Vacher to furnish their bedroom suite in Belgrave Square, and Lesage to arrange the drawing-room."

"I am glad there was de tact to leave de dining-room, and libraries to Seddons!"—interposed Flaszaski. "De dining-room,—de libraries,—de stables,—vas your Anglis triumpfs. No dining-room, libraries, or stables, out of Angland!"

"Denière has freighted a vessel with bronzes for them," said Loxley.

"And Dagoty with china."

"In fact, they seem to have bought up half Paris and bespoken half London!" cried Royston.

"I can inform you of *one* important acquisition, made by Sir Henry Harford, of which at present you have not the most remote sus-

picion!" observed the Duke of Wexford, lowering his voice to a becoming tone of mystery. "I had it yesterday in a letter from poor Cussy, that Harford has bribed off that very remarkable genius Grillarski, who has been educating for the last three years under Borel, at the expense of the Emperor of Russia. I have long heard it asserted that if any man be capable of revolutionizing the principles of the *cuisine moderne*, Grillarski is the man! What Harford may have paid down in the way of bonus, I cannot pretend to conjecture. But I know that the fellow is worth his weight in ortolans; and I must do Harford the justice to say that he has acted in the business with a degree of spirit for which I gave him little credit."

"He has not been Portumna's disciple for nothing!" added Royston with a sneer. "Har-

ford understands the tables of diplomacy, and the net produce (politically speaking) of a good *cuisine*."

"But if Nicholas should want to make it a national quarrel, as his imperial predecessor did the insult offered to his ambassador, by the laceman of St. Martin's Lane?" cried Loxley, laughing most ungastronomically at their folly.

"Suppose young Nick vas to forestal old Nick in his claim,—and have poor Harefar behead!" exclaimed Flaszaski, adding mustard to his turbot sauce, to the scarcely concealable indignation of his noble host.

"Cut off poor Harford's *head?*" cried Loxley.

"Completely turned as it is, he would never miss it!" was the good-natured rejoinder of his friend Royston.

"At all eventsh, he vas turn it de right vays,—he did choose him so sharming a vife!"

"Bravo, Flaszaski — bravo!" — interrupted the Duke of Wexford and Chorus. "You are the only fellow in town for saying clever things that disoblige no one,—pungent, but never bitter."

And when "Bravo Flaszaski!" had been echoed again and again, the little party became equally unanimous in asserting that the Harfords' house was to be the first in London,—to take the lead and the liberty of being pleasant.

"A purse without an end, youth, beauty, rank, fashion, talent,—what more can we desire?"—cried Loxley. "As the Duchess of Havering was saying yesterday, never did any one manage matters half so well! Reared in the hotbed of diplomacy, she has turned out a Talleyrand in petticoats."

Such were the announcements which preceded the arrival in town of Sir Henry and Lady Adelaide Harford! — But *these* might have been anticipated. *These* were secured by the tidings that reached London in the volumes of scented billets accompanying the graver despatches of the Faubourg St. Honoré. Not a chitchatter of fashion in Paris, not a scribbler of delicate scandals to delicate friends in Park Lane, but covered their reams of satin paper with envious details of the Harfords' acquisitions,—the Harfords' fêtes,—the Harfords' triumphs; and above all of the merits and charming manners of Lady Adelaide! —"She was such a delightful creature,—such an ornament to society,—so graceful, so gracious, so truly amiable!"

"I always knew you would find her so!" was the reply of the Duchess of Havering.

"My niece has hitherto occupied a false position. But her true character will now be seen. Now that she has nothing to fear from the misrepresentations of rivalship, it will be allowed on all sides that there never lived a more enchanting creature."

"So long as she remained with her father, she was sure to share the odium of his Lordship's embarrassments," said Mr. Strangways, not reflecting on how many persons present the odium of embarrassed affairs might happen to be reflected.

"So long as she remained single, the world was always marrying her to some one or other, and getting up some idle story to account for the non-fulfilment of its prophecies," added Lady Mary Mitchell, who had now cast aside her Longman-Tompkinson go-cart, and was contriving to go alone in London society, where

spunging is carried on on too extensive a scale for detection. "I recollect, many years ago—"

"My dear Lady Mary, nobody ought to carry back their recollections to many years ago!" remonstrated the duchess.

"They said she was to marry Lord Portumna," persisted Lady Mary, who saw nothing but what was complimentary in such a reminiscence.

"There never was any idea of the kind!" asserted the duchess.

"Of course not!—Portumna is what is called a rising man," observed St. Leger Kerr; "and rising men are never marrying men."

"Why to what *can* Lord Portumna *rise?*" demanded Lady Mary. "You talk of him as if he were a political adventurer!"

"He may rise to a pension, an earldom, and the garter.—A poor Irish lord, and a hanger-on

upon government,—what *is* he but a political adventurer? It would have been ruin to him and her, had he allied himself with Lady Adelaide de Vere."

"Then there was that young Mr. Wroughton at Naples," said Lady Mary; "he was really a charming person!"

"But so *borné*—so totally unfit for a woman of Adelaide's mind and sensibility!" interposed the duchess.

"And after all, a mere Northamptonshire squire!" echoed Lady Chertsey, who stood upon her countesship. "One could not expect Lady Adelaide de Vere to throw herself away on a Northamptonshire squire!"—

"One *did* however, expect to see her throw herself away on Lord Monthermer," said St. Leger Kerr, with a significant smile.

"On Lord Monthermer?—Fie!—a total incompatibility of habits, and pursuits," said

the Duchess of Havering, in a confidential tone. "At one time, I fancy Adelaide was really disposed to like Lord Monthermer. But on a more intimate acquaintance, we found him so susceptible,—so jealous,—so difficult to live with,—that she was advised to give the preference to Sir Henry Harford, whose position in the world is equally brilliant, and whose character far more amiable.—I never saw a more amiable person than Sir Henry Harford!"

"The fact is that Lord Monthermer's early life was passed in second-rate society," said Lady Chertsey; "a disadvantage which it requires considerable force of character to overcome."

"And Monthermer has not a particle of strength of character!" observed St. Leger Kerr. "One can never drive it into his head that either the House, or an argument, has two sides to it."

"The truth is," interposed the duchess, "Lord Monthermer mistook himself in seeking the alliance of a young and beautiful woman of fashion. What *he* requires is a person of a certain age, prudent enough to conform to his whims, eat roast mutton, and preside over the education of his family. He was not intended for the world. He is out of sphere in his house in Grosvenor Square. I understand that on his return to England, he intends to settle permanently at Delaval Castle. He will marry some neighbour's daughter; and London will not lose the attraction of a being so formed to become an ornament to society, as my niece."

"She is certainly quite a woman of the world!" added Lady Mary Mitchell, intending to convey a compliment, "and a most charming creature!"

"The great test of merit is success," said

St. Leger Kerr. "Lady Adelaide has carried off the best match of the day,—*ergo*, she is the most meritorious woman."

The world listened,—and confirmed the decree! Season after season does Western London rejoice in a few especial mansions, wherein opinions are moulded for dissemination among the multitude. Just as one or two leading mercers decide the fashion of ribbons and brocades, one or two leading duchesses constitute the majority that dictates to a minority of five thousand obsequient animalculæ, on such trifling matters as taste, morality, "Shakspeare, and the musical glasses." The rule once issued from these sanctuaries, that Lady Adelaide Harford was to be the most amiable of women and most eligible of acquaintance, was soon made absolute. Inscription in her ladyship's visiting list was canvassed for on every side;—no one was considered worth knowing who had

not the honour of being known at Harford House.

A few of the excluded of the exclusives, chose to hint that in former times whispers *had* been whispered against the now irreproachable idol of the day. But it is amazing to what a pitch of forgetfulness the great world works itself at will! Could Fauntleroy be brought back to life with a rent roll of hundreds of thousands, not a creature in London would be brought to recollect that he had ever been tried for forgery, and sentenced to death. They would "believe there had once been some foolish reports about the poor man;—but what then?—People are so *very* ill-natured!"—Not one among Lady Adelaide's troops of friends could remember having heard a syllable to her disparagement! The Duchess of Kimbolton, who was the stoutest remembrancer of her forgotten trespasses, was talked down, and

talked *at* as a very mischievous woman,—a *mauvaise langue*—a person to be dreaded and avoided!

A season's fêtes, and judicious management, added another cubit to the stature of her ladyship's virtue. The plausible truisms, the copper-plate-copy axioms of morality with which she garnished her conversation and correspondence, raised her to unparalleled distinction among the common-herd of the common-place.—The piquancies of her confidential dialogue with Portumna, Bagot, Royston, and others of her *affidés* reached not the ears of the uninitiated; but the sweet smile with which she distributed her *bonbons* of flattery, and scattered her concentrated essence-drops of excellence, charmed all hearts and eyes to her cause.

"So obliging, so friendly, so hospitable, so pleasing, so correct, so elegant"—so a hundred other bewitching and estimable things,

was she who had crushed the existence of one man,—the happiness of a second,—and imparted baleful recollections to the memories of a score!

No matter!—the world is still bowed down to worship. A few, more cunning than the rest, turn aside to conceal a smile as they contribute their mite of applause; but there are good men and true,—wise men and learned,—among the crowds of dupes who, even at this passing moment, swell her ostentatious triumphs.

Of her lesser contemporaries, what need be added? We hear rumours that the Duchess of Kimbolton (at the expiration of her year of widowhood) is to give her hand to the discreet Mr. Monkton;—that Lord Monthermer is pursuing a hopeful courtship at High Grove;—and that Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson has worn out the everlasting flint of Downing Street,

with her applications for a baronetcy, and tenders of a vote. But to such reports we lend our unwilling attention; — absorbed in admiring contemplation of the career of the WOMAN OF THE WORLD!

THE END.

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